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The winning of Lucia

Amelia Edith Huddleston Barr, D. Appleton and Company

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THE WINNING OF LUCIA

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By Amelia E. Barr

All the Days of my Life
an Autobiography

Playing with Fire

The Winning of Lucia

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"'It is my mother calling me!'"

[PAGE 174]

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THE WINNING OF LUCIA

A LOVE STORY

BY

AMELIA E. BARR

AUTHOR OF "THE BOW OF ORANGE RIBBON,"
"PLAYING WITH FIRE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. H. TAFFS

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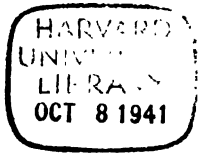

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TO

MRS. ARTHUR CURTIS JAMES

AS AN APPRECIATION

OF

A WONDERFULLY SWEET AND GRACIOUS

BIRTHDAY GREETING

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THE WINNING OF LUCIA

CHAPTER I

ABBOT'S REST

Her heart looks down and up,
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
As snowdrops pure.

WHEN Colonel Robert Ragnor bought Abbot's Rest, there was a good deal of interest and curiosity aroused among the gentlemen of the neighborhood. For the Colonel had stood for many years in the van of military operations both in India and Africa; and Abbot's Rest was a lonely house in the cleft of the mountains by which it was surrounded. True, the village of Sandalside was only two miles away, and the beautiful town of Kenton within a morning's drive, yet the place was so mountain-locked that anyone climbing to it would have said, "I and the wind are the only things stirring as far as the eye can see."

But the Cistercian monks, who settled on the spot in the eleventh century, made no mistake in selecting

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this location. It was a warm nest in the hills and the plateau on which their monastery stood a real garden spot of about sixty acres. The rains of centuries had brought it from the hills whatever they had to give, and the brothers had planted round their home a beautiful and bounteous garden. Fortunately, in all the changes and neglect that had befallen the property the garden had not been altered. It was yet conventual in character, and the Colonel would have none of its peculiarities modified.

The house had been subjected to restrictions of the same kind. It was a long, low Tudor structure, built of the gray stone abounding in the vicinity, but Time had clothed it in ivy, even to its fanciful stack of chimneys; and the ivy was full of birds' nests, not one of which would the Colonel suffer to be destroyed. Being built on the old conventual foundation, there was abundance of space; and the rooms were large, though not lofty. Wider windows, and more windows were inserted, all the comforts and luxuries of nineteenth century housekeeping introduced, and it was richly and appropriately furnished. But outside of such minor changes, Abbot's Rest was permitted to remain as it had been for centuries.

These changes occupied a year, and during that time Colonel Ragnor visited Sandalside frequently. But though courteous and charming in all his relations, he was so far reticent that no one felt at liberty

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to question him concerning his family. Finally speculation was tired of its own imaginations, and when, in the following spring, he suddenly took possession of his house, the circumstance was almost as fresh and pleasant as if it had been quite unexpected.

He was fortunate in the time of his coming. It was in May, when the mountain streams, born in the snow, and tossed with the north winds, were the loveliest, loudest, wildest things in nature. One of them took its way through his garden, hurrying down through archipelagoes of bowlders, and flashing over them in tiny waterfalls or resting in the deep pools where the trout were lying under the swaying elder boughs. All the landscape was flushed with delicate greens, and the larch copses were especially the freshest and greenest of all spring sights. Birds were singing in every tree, and from the deep valleys came the charmful, haunting cry of the cuckoo's double note.

The family of the Colonel, about which public interest had settled, proved to be a very small one; only a girl of ten years, her governess and maid. There was beside a middle-aged woman who was nominally the housekeeper, but whose authority on all domestic matters was usually undisputable. For she had the care of Miss Ragnor from the hour of her birth; and governesses and maids had come and gone and doubtless would come and go, just as Mrs. Ann Idle desired they should do.

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Many people pitied the child in the lonely house with no company but her father, her teacher and the querulous Ann; but there was no necessity for pity. The Colonel and his daughter were true companions, and Ann loved the child. Her father taught her to ride, and made her as much at home in the saddle as in her rocking-chair. He took her with him to the trout becks, and she soon learned to coax the speckled beauties home with her for dinner. On wet days and in the evenings she sat at his side helping him to make the different flies necessary for the fishing in different months; and it was her fancy and pleasure to fasten them round his fishing cap. If there was company she stayed with Ann, and watched or helped her in whatever she happened to be doing.

Of course there were lessons, but they were put in as weather and a variety of attractions permitted, for she learned rapidly, and there was not as much expected from girls then as there is now. Still when his daughter was sixteen years old, it struck the Colonel that she required something she was not likely to get at Abbot's Rest, and he entered her at a famous school in London for two years. Not unpleasantly the two years passed and then the Colonel brought his daughter triumphantly home. She was now all his own, and he counted the years during which she was likely to be so. Not quite eighteen yet, she would not think of marrying until she was

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twenty-five. That was the proper date for an English girl of good family to marry, and he felt sure that Lucia Ragnor would always do the proper thing.

She was very beautiful, with that fresh, young beauty which had bloomed and browned in the winds and the sunshine. Her face was finely formed, her gray eyes large, sparkling and darkly lashed, and her color exquisite. She had abundant hair and a good carriage and an expression so winning that people meeting her on the street felt impelled to smile as they passed, perhaps even to wish her "good morning," and if they did so they were freshly charmed with her sweet, glad voice and the courtly Colonel's lifted hat.

She had been much improved by her intercourse with girls of her own age, yet she had lost nothing of that innocent character which loved nature and was readily made happy by small pleasures. Her father still had from her a childlike love and obedience. Ann was still her comforter and counselor in all her little pains and troubles. She still found satisfaction in her pet birds and animals, and the flowers and the trees she had planted were yet sources of great interest and pleasure. She had come back home unspotted from her contact with the world.

Yet she had faults enough to keep her from that priggish perfection so unpleasant and so irritating to ordinary humanity. She could not help knowing that

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she was beautiful, and she knew it quite sufficiently. She was respectful and obedient to her father and even to Ann, but often authoritative to those in subjection to her; generally very good-tempered but often enough provokingly willful and though frequently visited by great and noble ambitions, just as often sighing after the pomps and vanities of the world, which she had heard much about, but which she could hardly be said to have seen.

During the past summer her father had occasionally taken her with him to informal wood and water parties, and her beauty and vivacity had attracted much admiration. But as the winter approached, the villas around were deserted by their summer residents, and Lucia, missing the excitement of their calls and company, did not fail to grumble a little at her dull life. Not to Ann, however. That busy woman would never have comprehended her case. She would have asked:

"However can you be dull, Miss Lucia? Have you not your piano and your books, your 'broidery and your rod and pony? Forbye your father and myself, and a perfect menagerie of beasts and birds, not to speak of your goldfish and the like. I'm fairly astonished at you. Dull indeed! Where would you go to get more sorts of entertainment than you get at Abbot's Rest?"

"If Abbot's Rest was full of old monks, Ann, as

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it used to be, my sorts of entertainment would be very proper and suitable, and no doubt they would consider themselves giddily frivolous with so many kinds of pleasures and do penance for daring to enjoy them; but you see I am not a monk nor even a nun."

"God forbid! A nun! Surely you have no thoughts of that kind."

"God forbid, Ann! My thoughts and wishes run in a directly opposite direction. I want to go into the world. I mean I want to go to balls and dinners and races and regattas and see fine ladies and handsome gentlemen—young soldiers like father used to be. I think I should like a lover—a very nice, good one, you know."

"Preserve us! Whatever are you talking about, Miss Lucia? You are no more than a child yet. I'm fairly astonished at you!"

"Ann, you know I am nearly eighteen years old—do not young ladies marry when they are eighteen or nineteen years old?"

"No, miss, they do not. Servant lasses, and the like of they poor things may commit matrimony, when they are just out of ankle tights and short gowns, for they have often no home worth naming. But young ladies with good homes and wealthy fathers and rich friends are more circumspect and respectable. They wait till they cut their wisdom teeth

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and know a good man from a bad one. There's nothing harder to find out in this life, and before a woman tries to read that riddle she ought to be full grown and have all her senses about her, God help her if she hasn't!"

"I shall let father choose my husband, and when he has done so, I shall insist on your looking him over, Ann. If he has a fault, you will find it."

"Any man you will bring to me, will be full of faults, I know that much, right now."

"What shall I do then?"

"Just bide your proper time. When the hour strikes, the right man will come—if there's any at all coming."

"Oh, Ann!"

"At the right hour comes the right man, if you can only keep from meddling—that is, if there's any man sorted out for you."

"There was none sorted out for you, was there, Ann."

"Mind your own affairs, miss. You have nothing to do with my matrimonial luck, or unluck."

"Pardon me, Ann."

"Ay, I am aye doing that, and you are aye requiring it."

"But, Ann, supposing there is no husband sorted out for a woman, and she chooses one for herself, what then?"

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"She builds a cross for herself, and is crucified on it every day. Now then, this is not a profitable conversation, and I am too busy to talk longer on any subject."

"I don't think you are kind to me, Ann. We were having a very profitable conversation—in my opinion."

"I never was unkind to you in all your life, and you have been in my arms, as it were, ever since you were half-an-hour old. Run away now, I am too busy to talk to idle folk longer. Find the Colonel, he is aye ready to waste good time on you."

The command sounded harsh, but it is the tone that gives the meaning to words, and Lucia knew Ann's tones and was not offended. Perhaps no human being can ever quite take the place of a mother, but Ann had done so—in so far as her ideas arising from race, a limited education, and a narrow, austere creed, permitted her to do.

That afternoon, a still, cold one in early November, Lucia was going to walk to the village. She went first to ask the Colonel to go out with her, but found him in blouse and slippers at his easel, painting with calm deliberation and singing softly as he worked his favorite tenor song from his favorite opera.

"Oh, father, I was in hopes you would walk to the village with me. It is so lonely without you."

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"Spare me today, Lucia," he answered. "I have just caught that 'gleam upon gloom' I have been long trying to capture. Come to the north window and you will see it—the long shafts of pale sunshine, glinting through the black clouds."

"We see that effect very often, father."

"Yes, we do, but very often, also, you want me to ride or walk or make a call or go a fishing, and I do not like to disappoint you. Today, however, my easel spoke first and as I am just catching the proper tints you must give me this afternoon, dear."

"All right, father. You shall stay at home, and capture the 'gleam upon gloom' effect, and I will walk to the village for my floss silk, and hairpins."

"Had you not better ride; it is getting late."

"I would rather walk. I will be at home before dark."

"Then good-bye! A pleasant walk to you," and as she closed the door, she heard him softly singing again.

Before leaving the house, she looked into the kitchen to ask Ann if she had any love letters for her to mail, or if there was anything she could bring her from the village. And Ann who was watching the printing of the butter, did not turn her head, but answered sarcastically:

"Bring yourself back safely, miss. That is as much as I expect from you."

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She did not take the carriage road to the village; there was a craggy footpath down the fell side, which would save her half a mile, and she took it. At a turn she so suddenly met a gentleman, that he raised his hat and said, "I beg your pardon, miss." Lucia smiled, and he returned the smile with such a frank, genuine look of honest admiration, as delighted her. She could not forget the stranger's face, and she found herself constantly wondering who it could be.

On her return home she went at once to Ann, and after an effort to arouse her curiosity asked who she thought it might be.

"I wouldn't wonder if it was the enemy in disguise. He knows better these days, than go about like a roaring lion."

"Ann, if you don't want to tell me, it is of no consequence. You cannot make me believe any longer that every stranger I meet is a wicked spirit. I can ask my father or Dixon. Very likely they will know."

"Certainly they will know, miss," replied the old woman scornfully. "The Colonel knows everything but what is under his nose; and as for Dixon what he does not know, is little worth asking after."

Lucia did not answer. She was startled by a laugh fresh from the heart, and full of pleasant good humor. She was still more amazed to hear her father laugh in concert, and it did not take her many min-

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utes to reach the parlor door. As soon as she opened it, Colonel Ragnor rose and said:

"Come here, Lucia!" Then he led her to the same pleasant-faced gentleman she had met on her way to the village, and said: "Ralph, my dear friend, this is my daughter Lucia."

"Ah, Robert!" answered the stranger, "I have seen her before. You are behind time again. You always were you know. We two met this afternoon, did we not, Lucia?" he asked as he drew her to his side.

"Yes, indeed, nearly two hours ago."

"And you have not forgotten me?"

"No, indeed! You made on me such an impression, that I have been seeking information about you from all I met."

"That is the finest compliment I ever received, Robert. Where did Miss Lucia get her talent? I do not remember that you ever paid compliments."

"No," answered the Colonel, "I do not believe I ever did. Flattery is a feminine gift, Ralph; it comes naturally even to little girls as you may see."

"But your daughter is no longer a little girl."

"Yes, yes!"

"Or if so, she is standing 'where the brook and river meet.'"

Fortunately, this argument was arrested by the dinner bell, and long before the evening was over,

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Lucia was as much at home with the stranger, as if she had known him all her life. Her father had known him longer. As boys, and as young men, they had lived and studied together, but on leaving college, circumstances had widely separated them. Robert Ragnor had married, entered the army, and subsequently lost sight of his friend; and Ralph St. Clair had gone into the shipping business, married, and settled in Glasgow.

A very charming evening followed. Colonel Ragnor entered with almost youthful spirits into all their reminiscences, told tale for tale, and quoted Greek and Latin puns with perfect naïveté and faith in his friend's remembrance of his classics. And then Mr. St. Clair looked slyly at Lucia, and laughed more heartily than if he had understood the jokes.

After dinner Lucia sang them their favorite Scotch songs, and was going to close the piano, but Mr. St. Clair said, "Let us now hear the song you love best," adding, "I can often read the heart of the singer, by the songs she sings. Let us have your favorite song." And without any hesitation and without needing the help of any written notes, she struck a few chords and then slipped into a strange, old melody, to which she sang charmingly:

"If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?

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Some cost a passing bell,
  Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown,
  Only a rose leaf down.

"If there were dreams to sell,
  Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
  What would you buy?"

She rose with the question, wished both a smiling "good night," and left them to answer it or not, as they wished. For a few minutes both were silent, then the Colonel asked in a reminiscent tone, "What would you buy, Ralph?"

"A dream daughter, just like Lucia. And you, Robert, what would you buy?"

"Do you remember the afternoon that we two spent with Vera Spencer, gathering blackberries in the wood by Penrith Beacon?"

"Mr. St. Clair made a movement of assent, and Colonel Ragnor continued, "I would buy a dream of gathering berries with Vera and of walking—no, floating, home with her in that marvelous sunset, when we were all silent because we were all too happy to speak."

"It was a blissful afternoon, Robert." Then they drifted into that graver conversation, which must mingle in the joy of every reunion after long years.

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The next morning as they sat at the breakfast table, Mr. St. Clair asked Lucia how she would like to visit Scotland. Though he asked Lucia, he looked at Colonel Ragnor, but Lucia answered, "I should like to visit Scotland very much." Her eyes also sought her father, but Colonel Ragnor was oblivious of both question and answer.

In another hour their pleasant visitor had departed, but it was a day or two before they settled down to their life again; Colonel Ragnor was restless and anxious, and a little despondent. Lucia had hoped that Mr. St. Clair's question would have solved the problem of the long, dull winter before her. She almost wished, since nothing had come of it that he had never visited Abbot's Rest. It was long before Ann could speak with anything like equanimity of the visitor. She gave him the blame of everything that went wrong about the house. The roasting jack was out of order—"No wonder! Birds to cook the other night at ten o'clock." The parlor chimney smoked—"It had never drawn right since that fire was lighted in the spare room, for that Mr. What-do-you-call-him." If Dixon drew himself a glass of ale, she pathetically begged him to "be carefu' for she did not expect the last brew would be fit to drink; folks couldn't brew good ale, and cook kickshaws for company at the same time."

It was about two weeks after Mr. St. Clair's visit,

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as Lucia was one morning dreamingly balancing her spoon on the edge of her coffee cup and half-listening to her father who was reading at intervals passages from *The Times* relating to the Irish question, that Dixon came in and laid a letter by the Colonel's plate. He glanced at it, and finished what he was reading, before he took it up. Lucia divined that it was from Mr. St. Clair, and she felt somewhat more interest in it, than in a parliamentary discussion, but her father appeared to be in no hurry to possess her with its contents. She finished her breakfast, she put away the potted char and Scotch marmalade, she wiped the silver and the richly gilded china, and gave Dixon full directions about the feeding of her pets and the safe-keeping of her dahlia bulbs.

Still Colonel Ragnor made no sign, and Lucia had been too well brought up to intrude on her father's thoughts, or exhibit her own curiosity; and finally her patience had its reward. The Colonel finished his newspaper, walked thoughtfully across the room, and at the open door said:

"Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair wish you to spend the winter with them in Glasgow; and Mrs. St. Clair is sure it will interest you to know that Maggie Starkie has been her own maid ever since you left school; and that she will be entirely at your service during your visit. Who is Maggie Starkie? I do not remember her."

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"Father, she is a daughter of Ann's cousin who married John Starkie who was in your regiment and a Glasgow man."

"Certainly, I remember him—a good soldier!"

"Maggie stayed with Ann while I was in London, and when Ann could not be with me, she sent Maggie in her place. I liked her to do so, for I was very fond of Maggie. I want to see her again; and as she is Glasgow-born and bred, she can tell me little things I ought to know, which would take me some time to find out."

"I remember the little girl now. You had better tell Ann. It will reconcile her to your leaving home."

"I had better not name Maggie to Ann. Ann thought herself badly used by her cousin two years ago, and she has not allowed me to speak of Maggie since. Ann was always a little jealous of my liking for Maggie. I would rather not name her."

"Very well. It is immaterial."

The Colonel made no further communication. He went to his private sitting-room, and Lucia was glad he did so, for her heart was in a tumult. The road into the world, of which she had read and heard so much was now open. Would she be allowed to go up and through and prove it? Her father had not yet spoken positively.

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CHAPTER II

THE FIRST WRONG STEP

Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!
MARMION. Canto vi

THE incense of coming triumphs, the gladness of days unborn, brightened for Lucia the long hours between breakfast and dinner. For Colonel Ragnor, wishing perhaps to give her time for reflection, took his fishing-rod and wandered up among the solemn misty mountains. It was no purposeless stroll, he knew "the strength of the hills" and he had good authority for going up there to pray.

At dinner he seemed to have forgotten the subject. He talked about soups and praised the curry and diverged very naturally from curry to the East Indies, and there he seemed inclined to stay. Lucia drew the conversation from Indian antiquities to Indian manufactures, hoping that this train of thought would suggest Glasgow, but instead it carried him

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still farther east, and brought on her a learned disquisition on Serica and its wondrous silks.

Dinner came to an end at last, and Dixon who had looked all the time as if he comprehended every word and was much edified thereby, removed the cloth. Lucia gave her father his last glass of port and lifting her sewing sat down to it with a countenance strangely cold, and just a little angry. All was very still, the ticking of a clock on the mantelpiece, and the occasional cracking of a walnut, which the Colonel seemed to eat more as an accessory to his thoughts than his wine, were the only sounds recognized.

If he had then opened his heart to his child, she was capable of a great sacrifice, and would have gladly made it. But he was one of those men who find it easier to suffer than to speak. Also, he had that day told himself when he stood alone before God, that he would neither be selfish nor cowardly, and that he would trust his child to God's infinite love and constant care. And if the Colonel hesitated it was not for long, though the half-hour seemed a very long hour to Lucia, before he said:

"My dear Lucia, I think you must accept Mrs. St. Clair's invitation to spend this winter with her. You will need some additions to your wardrobe, I suppose?"

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"A few, father. The important ones will be better bought in Glasgow."

"Well then, such things as you require at once, you can get in Kenton. Ann will go there with you tomorrow."

There were tears in his voice, and tears in his eyes, and his hands trembled as he took from his pocket-book a bank bill and handed it to her. And she saw, and yet she did not see. Ah! who but God can see the roads we make for ourselves. Yet He does see, and shapes our ends "rough-hew them as we will."

The best kitchen at Abbot's Rest was always a picture in its way; never more so, than when the blazing fire and candlelight made all sorts of dancing reflections from whitened hearth and polished tins and racks of many-colored earthenware. This night it was bright and cheerful as usual, but something troubled its presiding genius, for Dixon sat smoking his pipe up the chimney—a compromise only necessary in certain states of Ann's feelings—while she was beating the oaten cakes with an energy indicating strong emotion. And Lucia understood that her intended visit to Glasgow was the cause of trouble, so she thought it best to open the subject at once.

"Ann," she said, for Ann had pretended to be unaware of her presence—"Ann, I am going to Glasgow soon. I am going to stay all winter in Glasgow."

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"Glasgow, no doubt, is very much obliged to you for your company. It is a great honor for poor Glasgow," and the sarcastic tone, and mock politeness of this answer, could not be mistaken.

"She is heartily welcome to it, Ann. I expect to have a splendid time. I shall have a great many lovers and buy quantities of new dresses."

"*Tut!* Lovers are scarcer than ever before, and it will be strange enough if you come by an old one. As to dresses, you have o'er many now, and *that* I told the Colonel plainly."

"I did not think you could be so unkind to me, Ann."

"More dresses than you have already, is even down wastrie."

"But I must have the dresses, Ann, and you have more experience than I have, and——"

"And if I have more experience, it is all of it clean against a young girl going traipsing about Scotland, looking for a husband."

"What a shame to say such a thing about your own Lucia! I can scarce believe it of you, Ann. I am not going to look for a husband, but if I should find one, I might possibly take him."

"I make no doubt of it. Fools are easy matched."

"But you have never found a mate, Ann."

At this remark Ann turned quite around and, looking Lucia full in the face, replied, "If you weren't

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your mother's child, I would put you out of my kitchen, miss, forever. Take your own way, and if it leads you Love's way, all the worse for you—all the worse for you! That's all."

Something in her voice, tremulous and sad took away from Lucia all desire for further banter. She put her arms around her faithful friend, and told her that no other love should ever make her forget the only mother she had known. Then Ann softened immediately.

"Well, well, my dear lassie!" she answered, "let me get on with my cakes, for though it is straight against my judgment, I'll go with you to Kenton, or there's no saying how you may be guided."

As Colonel Ragnor sipped his tea that night, he talked freely of his friend, Mr. St. Clair, but he was not able to give Lucia much information about the circumstances soon to surround her. He had never seen Mrs. St. Clair, and he knew nothing of their domestic affairs, excepting that they were childless. However, they had adopted a nephew, who had lived with them for many years. This last statement he made in an embarrassed manner and Lucia felt somehow uncomfortably conscious, and resented the feeling, so to change the conversation she spoke of her desire to go to Kenton in the morning, and this being approved, Dixon received orders to drive her and Ann there.

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England has few more beautiful towns than Kenton on a fine day, and fortunately the next morning was clear and sunny. Also the fair old town wore a peculiarly picturesque aspect. Some civic holiday was in progress, the streets were full of people, conversation and laughter everywhere, and over all the pleasant tumult the haunting music of Kenton church bells rang out their sweetest carillons.

After the shopping was satisfactorily finished, these chimes drew Lucia to the church, and she was astonished to hear Ann ask her to remain outside, while she went in to say a prayer. Why should Ann, a strict Calvinist, want to pray in an Episcopal church? She wondered at the circumstance and when Ann came out, she wondered more, for it was plain she had been weeping. Then Lucia was curious and thoughtless enough to ask, "Why did you wish to stay alone in the church, Ann?"

"Because I wanted to weep for having gone there once too often. See you don't do the like of that foolishness." Her voice was sad and querulous and her manner forbade further questioning, but Lucia watched her all the way home and was conscious of being in the presence of some unknown sorrow.

The next two weeks were full of busy preparation. Days and nights passed rapidly away, and the last night came. It was a very happy one. She was always glad to remember that—glad to remember

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how cheerfully she read, how patiently she played, how merrily she sang the simple Scotch ballads her father loved. Towards midnight she toasted his slice of brown bread, and made his negus by the parlor fire, and when he had finished it, they went together to see that all was safe and well. Then he left her at her own room door with a kiss so solemnly tender that it was a visible benediction.

For some reason, not at the time apparent to Lucia, Colonel Ragnor instead of taking the train direct to Carlisle, where Mr. St. Clair was to meet them, went in his own carriage to Keswick, and took the coach from there to Penrith. It was after dark when they arrived there, cold, wearied and hungry; but the manifold comforts of the old Crown Inn soon restored Lucia to an appreciation of life. But Colonel Ragnor was evidently fighting either some powerful passion or some painful restraint. All day he had been restless and yet reticent, and now instead of the slippered ease in which he always drank his after-dinner wine, he was walking up and down the room in an exceedingly nervous manner, and only raising his glass occasionally, as he passed the table.

He seemed uneasy, too, at the presence of Lucia, and it was evident he wished to be alone. But she had scarcely reached her room ere she heard a quick imperative voice asking for Colonel Ragnor. It required no little courage to break the observance of

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a lifetime, and venture undesired into her father's presence and business. But she was anxious, feeling sure that he was in trouble, and she trusted her intrusion would be forgiven for her love's sake. While she was hesitating and still uncertain, a chambermaid appeared, and in reply to her inquiries, said the visitor to Colonel Ragnor was Lord Fenwick. Who Lord Fenwick was, all the northern counties knew, and Lucia wondered what business he could possibly have with her father.

She resolved to return to the parlor, and on opening the door she saw at once that a dispute of no ordinary character was in progress. Colonel Ragnor held in his hand some papers, about which he was talking with a great deal more decision and even temper than was at all common with him on any subject.

Lord Fenwick leaned against the high oak mantel, perfectly calm, almost indifferent in appearance, and yet it was evident that Lucia's entrance powerfully affected him. Lucia placed herself beside her father, and he quietly took her hand, but made no further acknowledgment of her presence. The exchange of some property seemed to be the object of Colonel Ragnor's anxiety, and the curiosity which had been roused in Lucia by the knowledge of her father's connection in any way with a nobleman so powerful and so popular was not lessened by hearing him say:

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"You know, Arthur, that you owe me some reparation financially, not to speak of other things which nothing now can alter, and you may partially pay it in this way without loss to yourself."

A slight color drifted across his lordship's face, and his eyes looked dangerously bright, but he preserved the utmost impassibility of manner and answered:

"You are right, Robert. Late as it is, I acknowledge it. I will send Mr. Moser, my lawyer, to arrange the matter as you desire tomorrow morning."

"As soon as possible. We are going on to Carlisle by the noon train."

"Will nine o'clock suit you?"

"Very well."

"Then he will be here at nine o'clock."

During this conversation Lucia had taken more than a passing notice of Lord Fenwick's appearance. She saw a remarkably handsome man, no longer young, but possessing more than the usual charm of youth, perfect polish, an air of distinction, and a power of self-control which enabled him whether he humbled or exalted himself, to be master of the situation.

There was a moment's silence after the arrangement, and then Lord Fenwick said:

"Is this all I can do for you now, Robert?"

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"Lord Fenwick leaned against the high oak mantel, perfectly calm"

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"I need nothing for myself. You know well that this is a matter of feeling, not interest."

"I am sure of that. Believe me, I am glad to have an opportunity of gratifying your desire in this matter. You have not introduced your daughter to me. Pardon me for reminding you of the omission."

Colonel Ragnor looked up with an expression at once incredulous and indignant, but after a moment's hesitation rose and went through the form of introduction with great dignity. The little social ceremony had been forced from him and was evidently displeasing, as was also the look of admiration on his lordship's face. He reminded him of his promise to send Mr. Moser early and by remaining standing left Lord Fenwick no alternative but to order his carriage.

It had been well if Colonel Ragnor had then spoken positively to his daughter about this man with whom he seemed to be at once so familiar, and so offended. But there were many things which urged him to keep silent, chief among them the necessity it would cause of a conversation about Lucia's mother. He could not endure to think of her, much less talk of her in conversation with Lord Fenwick and he felt reasonably sure the nobleman would never cross his daughter's path again. He was glad now that she was going to Scotland. Fenwick might make an excuse for visiting Abbot's Rest,

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but he could have no idea of Ralph St. Clair's residence, and long before Lucia returned home, the meeting would have been forgotten. So he believed, for nothing is more easily credited than the sophistries our inclinations offer to our judgment.

Before they finished breakfast next morning Mr. Moser came, a little neat, pleasant-looking man, who was apparently well acquainted with Colonel Ragnor. As it was likely the gentlemen would be engaged for an hour or more, Lucia proposed to herself a ramble about the romantic old town. But Mr. Moser insisted on her accepting the use of his pony carriage, and she was still child enough to feel pleasure both in the carriage and the ride.

And in the stillness and quiet of the early morning, she saw a little parable whose lesson lingered in her heart, until experience taught her how full of sweetness and hope was its meaning. At the wide open door of a pretty house there was a small table covered with a white linen cloth and on it a plate holding a little salt and some sprigs of rosemary and boxwood. As they passed it, the driver raised his hat and to the inquiring look of Lucia, he replied:

"It is Death in the house, miss. It is an old custom and Cumberland folk would not like to give it up, and indeed 'tis no popish custom, or my lord would not have it in his town; but what it means, I don't believe the parson himself knows."

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"There is rosemary for remembrance," said Lucia softly to herself; and she had a dim kind of understanding that the salt and the evergreens said, "Believe that beyond life is immortality." But not until she had scattered evergreens above her own dead, did she fully understand that sweet, low voice in which nature comforts humanity, typifying in her own changes the wonderful mystery of death evolving life.

On her return to the inn, she entered a little store to purchase some of the pretty cushion lace which gave to Penrith a wide local fame, and when she came out, Lord Fenwick stood by the carriage talking to the man who was driving her. For a moment she was irresolute, but before she could decide on what she ought to do, he had placed her in the carriage, wrapped her furs around her, and commenced a conversation. She hardly knew what about, but no man living knew the art better, and somehow in their five minutes' intercourse, he had managed to find out, without asking a question, not only where she was going but all she could tell about Mr. Ralph St. Clair. While talking to her he held his hat slightly raised, and Lucia noticed that in the daylight, he was a little gray, otherwise he looked even handsomer than he did the previous night.

All at once the remembrance of her father's evident dislike of the man flashed across her memory,

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and it made her say a much colder and more constrained "good-bye" than she might otherwise have done. He understood the change, but refused to acknowledge it, and he made his eyes speak the admiration he durst not avow in any other way than by a marked assurance that he would see her again, very soon.

Lucia was much pleased and flattered, but she did not tell her father of the meeting. This was her first wrong step, and it caused her infinite sorrow. But when she got back to the inn, there was barely time to catch the northward train, and so at first she had some shadowy excuse for her want of confidence. During the journey to Carlisle, she would have plenty of time to talk over the circumstance, and she resolved to treat it as if it was a very natural and simple occurrence. Yet she knew it was not a natural and simple occurrence. Lord Fenwick told her he had been watching two hours for her, and also somehow managed to make her feel that it was a very extraordinary and pleasant occurrence.

The railway journey was not propitious for confidence. One station after another was passed, and passengers were coming and going, and their carriage was never empty. And as the time went on, the Colonel grew more and more depressed and silent. He seemed incapable of conversation, and Lucia was incapable of forcing it, on the subject of

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Lord Fenwick. She knew instinctively he would resent it and it would be dreadful to part with her father in anger. The pleasure of her winter would be ruined. All the way to Carlisle she argued the case—to tell or not to tell—in her own heart and finally decided it by a process not common in the courts, that is, she acquitted herself this time, upon a mental promise to commit the fault no more.

Mr. St. Clair was waiting for them at Carlisle and Lucia was given to his care. They spent a pleasant hour together, and parted in the midst of smiles and good wishes. The Colonel was not a demonstrative man, and Lucia was not disposed to err in this respect in his presence. But each knew the depth of love hidden in their common words of courtesy and they trusted to it and were satisfied.

It was dark when they arrived in Glasgow and the streets were gloomy, wet, and miserable enough. But the handsome residence before which their carriage stopped was all light and warmth and color. The door opened as they approached, for their arrival had been watched for, and a pretty, elegantly dressed woman took possession of Lucia with great empressment, and conducted her at once to her own apartment. It was bright and glowing with fire and gaslight, and a young girl stood at a toilet table arranging some geranium leaves and roses.

"Maggie," said Mrs. St. Clair, "while Miss Rag-

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nor is here, you are her maid;" then turning to Lucia, she added, "Maggie understands her duties, dear, and is a thoroughly good girl. Give her your keys and she will put your things in order before dinner, which I have put off for an hour and a half, so you need not hurry."

With ready fingers Maggie removed Lucia's wraps, and drew a low couch before the fire for her to rest on. A cup of fragrant tea, and the pleasant basking in the warmth and quiet, soon obliterated all marks of fatigue, and by the time Maggie was ready for the duties of the toilet, Lucia was quite awake to their importance. For she understood thoroughly the value of a first impression and was not inclined to forego any advantage to be derived from a becoming dress. After a slight consideration she selected a gown of pale pink silk, elaborately trimmed with white silk lace. It had always been a fortunate dress, and she was inclined to try its power again. She felt at home in it, and was confident of its charms. This evening it behaved beautifully, came out of its wrapping fresh as if new, and fell into its proper folds at once. Her mirror told her how becoming was the dress, and how lovely she was, and this consciousness of beauty invested her with a power which is the divine right of beauty and against which there is no enchantment that can prevail.

On going downstairs she was met by a footman

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who opened the door of a handsome room and announced "Miss Ragnor." For one moment she stood still, and in that moment photographed the scene on her memoy. At one side of the fireplace in a large, low chair Mrs. St. Clair reclined; her satin dress shimmering in the brilliant light, her eyes half closed, one hand toying with her fan, and the other dropped over the arm of the chair petting a skye-terrier.

Mr. St. Clair sat opposite his wife; he had laid his newspaper across his knees and was listening to his nephew who was explaining some statement by means of a diagram drawn on the back of a letter which he held in his hand. This young gentleman was the nephew of whom Colonel Ragnor had spoken to his daughter, and he was in all respects the most remarkable of the group, remarkable for his great stature and powerful frame and for his singular face which was hardly redeemed by all its intellect and expression, from the charge of ugliness.

He was standing with his back to the fire in the center of the hearthrug, and the rapid decisive way in which he was speaking made Lucia understand instinctively that he was a power and an authority in the house. Mr. St. Clair introduced his nephew as Mr. Geoffrey Gardiner, and Lucia had the satisfaction of seeing that her beauty, enhanced by her admirable toilet, had taken all by surprise. Mrs. St. Clair resigned at once her intentions of patronage.

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As for Mr. Gardiner he felt almost ill-used. His uncle had spoken of Lucia in such a way as had led him to think her a pretty, unsophisticated country girl, whom it would be pleasant enough to amuse and perhaps to fall in love with.

But before this charming girl, with her composed manner, and fashionable dress, his magnanimous intentions vanished. He gradually subsided from his central position, and leaning on the back of a chair watched the beautiful and animated face before him. To this occupation he gave himself up with such evident pleasure, that Mr. St. Clair felt a sudden fear for what he had done. If Geoffrey should love with all the willful passion of which he was capable and Lucia should refuse to listen to him, what trouble might he not expect from his fierce and stubborn temper?

He tried to renew the subject they had been discussing before Lucia's entrance, but the plans about which Geoffrey had then been so eager had lost their charm for him. He had a new subject of interest which was likely to absorb all minor ones. Hitherto with Geoffrey Gardiner to will a thing, had been to accomplish it; every obstacle in life had given way before his clear judgment, impetuous temper, and magnificent physical power. To his uncle and aunt he was an oracle; in the business house with which he was connected nothing was done without his ap-

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proval. Old men of acknowledged capacity and position spoke of him as "an extraordinary young man." Young ladies, in spite of his lack of beauty, courted his attentions and repaid them with their sweetest smiles. Tonight for the first time Geoffrey Gardiner doubted his invincible success, and feared before the face of a woman. For Love had thrown its enchantments over him and he saw Lucia through the glamor of a spell which exalted her above all mortal women.

Some kind sprite knocks softly at every soul to tell it when its fate is at hand, and Geoffrey had heard the summons and answered it in his usual impulsive way. And that the womanly instinct of Lucia had divined much that had never been explained to her was evident from the postscript attached to her first letter home.

> I have told you, father, that I think Mr. Gardiner the handsomest ugly man I ever saw. Was it part of my mission here to subdue him? If so, I send you Cæsar's bulletin—*Veni, vidi, vici.*

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CHAPTER III

LOVE CAME TOO LATE

Her young heart blows
Leaf by leaf, coming out like a rose.
If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be!

NO man ever acts from a single motive, and there were some entanglements in the course which Geoffrey had rapidly marked out for himself that he scarcely yet saw how to avoid. But in all his perplexities he had always gone to his friend Archie Galbraith not so much for advice as for the comfort of expressing to a sympathizing listener his own views and feelings. Therefore, the morning after the arrival of Lucia, the office of Galbraith and Company in Virginia Street was very early honored with a call from Mr. Gardiner.

The friends sat smoking a few minutes without much conversation, but Archie knew Geoffrey had not come at that time in the day without some special cause. So he waited patiently till it should appear,

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watching as he waited the smoke of his cigar curling hazily upward in the heavy air.

At length Geoffrey said, "Archie, my aunt has got a new pet."

"Really! Is it a terrier, or a King Charles, or an Italian grayhound, or what is the style she has selected this time?"

"You must speak with a little more respect, my friend. It is a very fashionable young lady," and there was the faintest touch of resentment in the tone of Geoffrey's voice.

"Oh! I beg pardon Geoffrey, but you know Mrs. St. Clair's pets always have been—puppies."

"I hope you mean nothing personal, Archie," and in spite of himself Geoffrey laughed at his friend's comical look and intonation.

"Why, no, I have a very distinct remembrance of at least half-a-dozen of them. There was that little brute, who always took me for a rival and treated me with an insolence that would have been insufferable in a two-legged animal. Then there was that skye-terrier with the national taste for whiskey, and whom I firmly believe died of delirium tremens—and"—

"Do be sensible, Archie. I came to talk to you about the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and—"

"Geoffrey I have heard that story before."

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"No, you have not. There may be lovelier girls than Lucia Ragnor, but if those are, I have never seen them."

"I hope you are not going to fall in love with this young lady."

"Why not?"

"Because it won't do. It won't do, Geoffrey! There is little Flora Kelvin; you have been making love to Flora for nearly two years. I expect she loves you a little by this time."

"There is no engagement between us."

"Let me tell you, then, that there ought to be."

"Archie, how do you know? What reason have you to make such a statement?"

"I could give you plenty of reasons. One will suffice—you have taught her to love you. Do not make it an unfortunate lesson for her."

"Well, of course I shall do nothing wrong to Flora. I want you to come and take dinner with me tonight. When you have been under the spell of Miss Ragnor we can talk more on an equality."

"I cannot come tonight, Geoffrey. I am going with Grace and Mary Lindsey to a concert."

"Why, Archie! Two old maids against Miss Ragnor and myself."

"Two daughters of my father's dearest friend, Geoffrey. I cannot, I would not, disappoint them."

"You are a little beyond my philosophy, Archie,

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but I know you are right. Will you come tomorrow?"

"If nothing prevents me—if there is any unavoidable prevention, I will let you know."

Thus the friends parted. Geoffrey fretted and wearied over his accustomed duties until dinner-time, and Archie resuming his seat at his desk dismissed everything from his mind but yarns and commissions.

Six o'clock came, though Geoffrey thought it never would, and through the bustle and light of Argyle Street he made his way rapidly to the stately quiet of the West End. It was his present object to be dressed for dinner, and in the dining-room when Lucia entered it, so that he might have the pleasure of watching her, but he was disappointed. She was already in the room. He saw her through the open door, sitting before the fire rocking herself in a low, comfortable American chair. An atmosphere of thoughtful calm pervaded her, and to Geoffrey, with his unrestful heart, going into her presence was like going into a sanctuary.

She received him with a pleasant smile and asked how he had spent the long, dull day.

Of course he told her an untruth and made the usual remarks about the hurry of business and the flight of time.

"Well, Mr. Gardiner," she replied, "I have been

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unmistakably idle all day. According to Dr. Watts, I ought to have been proportionably wicked, for you know *who* he says finds the work for idle hands."

"Dr. Watts is orthodox authority for that gentleman's engagements, I have no doubt. Don't you think, for instance, that he has been helping you to do mischief, by suggesting the bewildering toilet you are wearing?"

"Oh, no! My maid Maggie suggested it."

"Nevertheless the toilet is—"

"Do not praise it, Mr. Gardiner. Consider the source you have assigned it. And if you are a prudent man, do not dispraise it, for, as the Spanish nobleman said, 'you never know who is beside you.' "

"Are you superstitious?"

"Certainly, I am. Everyone is superstitious; only I have the honesty to avow it. I am pretty sure you will deny it."

"How can I acknowledge what I do not understand?"

"A Scotsman's answer. You reply to one difficulty by suggesting another."

"I am from your own side of the border. What makes you think I am a Scot?"

"First your stature—like the Scotch mountaineers you are a son of Anak; second your complexion, *roy* is the national idiom, is it not? Third, your disposi-

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tion to answer questions by asking questions. Are not three reasons rendered, enough?"

"If they are not more complimentary, quite so."

"What could you expect in return for your innuendo about my dress?"

Here they were interrupted by a summons to dinner, and a very pleasant dinner it was. Mr. St. Clair had plenty of news and pleasant gossip, and Mrs. St. Clair listened and made amusing comments, just sarcastic and spiteful enough to show their feminine origin. The evening was a very gay one. Much company came and went; there was music and dancing and an after-midnight supper. This life certainly was not a dull one, but was it one which

> . . . durst send
> A challenge to its end,
> And when it came say, "Welcome friend!"

Just yet Lucia did not think of this. While Maggie unbound and brushed her hair, she remained long in reverie, but the subject of it was explained by her first question:

"Maggie, what kind of a man is Mr. Gardiner?"

"Mr. Gardiner, miss? Indeed it is easy seen, that he is big enough, and handsome enough for any use in life."

"That is not what I mean, Maggie. What kind of a heart or disposition or temper has he got?"

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"His heart is big enough to hold up his body, big as it is—and whiles I think Master Geoffrey's faults are better than some folks' virtues, as to his temper—well—I am thinking he has as much of the devil in him, as will keep the devil out of him."

"That is a pleasant consideration, Maggie, in case he does not find grace to mend his faults."

"There is another thing, Miss Ragnor. If Master Geoffrey doesn't mind his faults as quick as might be, he doesn't fash himself anent other people's faults and maybe that ought to count something to his credit."

"I think it will, Maggie. We are told on good authority, that God will not judge hardly those who judge others mercifully."

"I believe that, Miss Ragnor, besides which, it is better to have to do with God than with all God's saints."

"Well Maggie, we must try and accept our friends and acquaintances as they are. We cannot alter them."

"And also, Miss Ragnor, we be to accept ourselves as we are, and not pretend to be what we are not."

Lucia smiled and the thought lingered with her until she lost it in sleep.

At this time Lucia did not know her own mind. She had a romantic remembrance of the handsome

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Lord Fenwick, of his great beauty not injured but matured by time, and of that air of distinction which pervaded his every word and action and which is only attained by habitual living on the highest peaks of social life. Nor could she forget his seductive melancholy, and the look of passionate admiration with which he had regarded her, when he promised to see her again, very soon.

Still when Geoffrey was with her, she felt all the charm of his great mental and physical powers, though she resented the concessions they forced from her in his presence, and made constant resolutions to oppose his influence. The fact was, however, that her affections wavered yet as

> The swan's down feather,
> That stands upon the swell at full of tide,
> And neither way inclines.

Geoffrey's condition was still more unsettled and perplexing, for he was neither "off with his old love, nor yet on with his new love." At first he had sent excuses to Miss Kelvin for his absences but gradually even this form had been neglected, and as the days grew to weeks it became more and more difficult for him to explain or to apologize. Very soon he put the subject out of his thoughts, and was annoyed at any allusion to it, so that when Archie said one evening:

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"Geoffrey, I met Mrs. Kelvin this morning on Buchanan Street and I promised her to call on them this evening," he merely replied,

"Did you? How was she?"

"Very well."

"Did she name me?"

"Not in any way, but you may be named during my call and if so, what am I to say?"

"I do not know. What do you advise?"

"Always the truth and the whole truth. If I were you, I should go and tell Flora frankly about Miss Ragnor and your passion for her. Flora is a proud little lady, and will not trouble you either with complaints or heroics. Go with me this evening. I will wait for you, if you desire."

"I cannot go this evening. I have promised to go out with my aunt and Miss Ragnor. You may be able to give me better advice after seeing Flora. I will wait and see."

Then he dismissed the subject. There was something pleasanter to think about than Flora Kelvin and his entanglement with her.

He kept the pleasanter thought with him as he walked home, and its embodiment met him as he entered it—a woman very fair, clothed in some white transparent material, with the white, waxen berries and glossy green leaves of the mistletoe gleaming in her hair and on her breast—a woman

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> . . . as pure as a pearl,
> And as perfect—a lovely and innocent girl!

His strong passionate nature found a momentary expression in one word—*"Lucia!"*

Only that one word, but it was heart deep. Apparently it found no echo. She answered coldly and went on. Then he blamed himself bitterly for his premature folly, for Lucia was shy and cold during all the evening. In fact she had intended making a much more effective entry, and she was angry at Geoffrey's forestalling her intention. So she was well disposed to teach her too eager lover the lesson that most young men are too presumptuous or too impatient to divine. Love out of time is always love out of tune and no doubt Geoffrey felt love to be out of time and tune all that evening.

So much so that his first remark to his friend when they met on the following day was "Poor little Flora! I suffered so much myself last night, Archie, that I am almost ready to ask her to marry me."

"You will not be required to make such a sacrifice, Geoffrey."

"What do you mean?"

"I was invited last night to Miss Kelvin's marriage."

"Archie Galbraith! You are joking!"

"I am in earnest. It is a fact."

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"Well! Well! After that, who would trust any woman again?"

"Come, Geoffrey, you are living in a glass house. I would not throw stones."

"What did they say about me?"

"They never mentioned you. I was introduced to the bridegroom."

"Oh, I know! that rich, gouty old Bailie Littlejohn, I suppose."

"You are wrong. He is, on the contrary, a young and exceptionally handsome man, a Captain in the regiment of dragoons now at Stirling Castle. He was quite splendid in scarlet and gold, I assure you."

"When is she to be married?"

"In a month."

"What is his name?"

"Captain Cathcart. He is of a fine family and has seen service already. He returns to duty today until the wedding."

"I am glad of that, for I shall go and tell Miss Flora what I think of her."

"Ask yourself, Geoffrey, what your opinions are worth before you trouble her with them."

"I am sure she has not forgotten me."

"I am sure she has. I thought her very much in love with her handsome soldier."

"I shall go and see the false little flirt and have an explanation, whether she likes it or not."

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"Do nothing of the kind. It would be absurd. She has buried your memory; let it rest in peace."

The motives which led Geoffrey to disregard his friend's advice were doubtless various and complex, but one or more of them carried the day, and seven o'clock that evening found him in the pretty drawing-room where he had so often waited for Flora. He thought of the shy, blushing girl that used to come so softly and happily to greet him, of the little white hand she had laid in his, of the blue eyes that looked into his eyes, of the curly brown head and slim, graceful figure, and his heart was warm and tender when the door slowly opened and Flora entered.

But it was a different Flora. The timid shrinking girl that had been wont to meet him with tender, blushing embarrassment, now approached with a sang-froid and polite indifference more galling than any amount of reproach. She drew her chair under the gas, and crocheted with perfect ease and calmness of manner. So cold and serene was she, that all his prepared speeches froze on his lips.

He had told himself that only the best of motives brought him into her presence. Flora saw deeper and discovered some that Geoffrey would not have liked to acknowledge—even to himself—thoughts which would have held Flora in reserve, thoughts of the same selfish character, which Æsop gives the detestable dog in the manger. But she continued talk-

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ing on indifferent subjects in the quietest manner until the clock chimed eight. Then she rose saying:

"Tea is served now. Will you go and see mamma and have a cup?" She would have opened the door, but he reached it first.

"Stop, Flora!" he said. "Let us speak honestly, if only for a moment. You love me, and you are going to marry Captain Cathcart."

"I do not love you, Mr. Gardiner;" and she lifted her eyes, and looked him steadily in the face.

"Since when have you ceased to love me, Flora?"

"Since you ceased to be worthy of it."

"You soon found a more worthy lover," said Geoffrey, in a mocking tone.

"Rather, I returned to an old one. Captain Cathcart offered me his hand two years ago. You know *why* I then refused it. Mr. Gardiner might have omitted the taunt. Satan reproving sin, is not a consistent spectacle."

"Are we two to part thus?"

"We never ought to have met again. Why did you come?"

"My heart brought me."

"No, no, I will tell you why you came—to make me suffer a miserable regret, to insult me with excuses for having ceased to love me. Do you not understand, sir, that there are wrongs hard for a

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woman to forgive? Allow me to pass, Mr. Gardiner."

He had no right, he had no power to detain her. He hardly knew whether he was glad or sorry, but angry and stunned by his dismissal, he made his way to the door and let himself out. As he did so, he remembered how often under summer stars, and winter moonlight, Flora had lingered on the porch with him, both of them sorry to say "good night." But he put that, and many other memories, away with a resolute will. He would see the future only in the star-like eyes of Lucia Ragnor, and perhaps his most sincere marvel was the same as that of the hero of Locksley Hall—how the young lady

> . . . having known him, could decline.

On a range of narrower feelings, and a lower heart than his, the never ending puzzle of cast-off lovers, how women having had the advantage of their acquaintance, could possibly put up with prigs and dandies! Geoffrey certainly felt as if this night Lucia had really a right to be kind to him, and if she was, he told himself positively, he could let all the rest go by.

It was impossible for Lucia to have had any knowledge of this breaking of the old love between Geoffrey Gardiner and Flora Kelvin, and yet some-

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how women hold a divining cup in such matters. At any rate, never had the new love been half so kind and frankly pleasant, and a couple of hours of such consolation enabled him to think of Flora with equanimity; and Mr. St. Clair passing his nephew's door late that night, heard him softly singing the old English refrain:

"If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

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CHAPTER IV

THE WAY OF TEMPTATION

Time and chance are but a tide,
Slighted love is sair to bide.

THAT unknown something which stands in the way of answering letters had in a measure interfered with the long epistles that Ann had at first written to beguile her loneliness. But the old lady felt hurt at the short infrequent generalisms that repaid her detailed and circumstantial efforts and had gradually adopted a laconic style which was under the conditions no darkening of knowledge. For Lucia considered herself absolutely familiar with all the probabilities and possibilities of the life at Abbot's Rest.

She was, therefore, much astonished when Ann informed her in a queer little note just before Christmas that the Colonel had gone to Penrith. She "hoped he had good reasons for traipsing round the country-side at such a tempestuous time of the year,"

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she said, "but if he had, no other person knew anything concerning them."

This circumstance interested Lucia far more than Ann could have guessed. She was sure only some important event would have taken her father from home, during the season when the mountain roads were full of snow and travel difficult and uncomfortable. Then she remembered that it was at Penrith her father had met Lord Fenwick before and she could not avoid putting him and her father's journey together.

She had not forgotten the sad, handsome face which had looked for a few moments into her life, and this morning she abandoned all attempts to do so. She fell into a reverie which ended in a reality. There was the rattle of carriage wheels in the silent square, an imperative ring of the door-bell, and then Maggie with an expression and intonation only perceptible to Lucia's quick ear, introduced *"Lord Fenwick."*

Lucia advanced blushing and beautiful to meet him and he led her back to her chair and drew his own beside her, explaining the while how an order from the court had prevented him until this hour, from fulfilling the promise he had made to see her again very soon.

"But when did you see my father?" she inquired, for she was sure that in some way or other there was

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a connecting link between Colonel Ragnor's visit to Penrith and Lord Fenwick's visit to herself.

"Your father, Miss Ragnor! I have not seen him since we parted in your presence at Penrith."

"Indeed, Lord Fenwick, I surely thought you brought me some message from him, for this morning I received a letter stating he had gone to Penrith. As soon, therefore, as I saw you, I felt sure you would be able to tell me why Colonel Ragnor had taken such a disagreeable journey at this season of the year."

"I do not know, but I can conjecture."

"Then may I ask you to tell me?"

His eyes softened, and an untranslatable expression flitted across his face.

"It is connected with your mother. Her only relative still lives there. Did you not know this?" he asked, as he looked into her eyes and took her softly by the hand.

"No. My mother has never been more to me than a beautiful abstraction—as the angels in heaven. I know nothing beyond Abbot's Rest. I did not even know that my father and you had been friends until I saw you at Penrith."

"*Had been!* You are right, Miss Ragnor. It is my misfortune, that we are no longer friends."

"Your misfortune may not necessarily be your fault, Lord Fenwick. Let me speak to my father for

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you. He is incapable of nourishing ill will or anger towards anyone."

"Do not name me at all at present, Miss Ragnor. It would be a most unfortunate time to do so, and might prevent our future reconciliation. Yet I ask you to believe and trust me when I say that I have sought your acquaintance, hoping for your intercession and good offices at the proper time."

"You of course know the most propitious time, but could there be any better opportunity than the Christmas feast? All hearts are then inclined to peace and good will."

Here Mrs. St. Clair's entrance interrupted a conversation rapidly becoming too confidential. Then Fenwick exerted all his powers to charm the lady and he fully succeeded. After a delightful half-hour, he left with a promise to return to dinner, and afterwards to accompany the ladies to the theater.

In his conversation Lord Fenwick had said nothing that could be construed into love-making, but he had not avoided or chosen to avoid those vague elusive impressions by which one soul enters into relations with another soul. And he was a fascinating man; the woman who listened to him once would be almost certain to listen to him again.

Mrs. St. Clair divined exactly the position between Lord Fenwick and Lucia Ragnor, and she thought it no wrong to favor a love affair that appeared to

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be so advantageous to her guest, and so promising to her own social hopes.

"You know, Ralph," she said proudly, to her husband, "I am a Campbell of Lorn. I take no steps down for Fenwick, and I intend this marriage of Ragnor and Fenwick to set the door open for my entrance into the northern nobility."

"I do not think Lucia cares a halfpenny for Lord Fenwick."

"Is that all your eyes have taught you, Ralph? Let me tell you, they are both equally in the love song."

"Do you really think so?"

"You might as well ask whether the fiddle or the fiddlestick makes the tune. He is coming to dinner tonight. Watch them a little. It is true that the idea of Fenwick is yet but on the horizon of Lucia's thoughts, but watch them both. When he enters the room tonight, his eyes will seek hers, dilating and flashing with delight and her blood will rush in a crimson tide over her face. Surely Ralph, you have seen the light which falls on the face of a man out of the face of a woman that loves him."

That night Love fashioned Destiny. When Lord Fenwick entered the St. Clair drawing-room he found Lucia alone, and he permitted himself to use all the charms of his wooing. The beautiful girl in her richly embroidered India muslin, with one white

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camilla among the laces of her bertha, had an irresistible charm, and he counted her, even for herself alone, well worth the winning. Further than this, he had not asked himself for the reason of his infatuation. He wooed her with words of fire and music that went singing and shining like a glorified atmosphere round her, and that night created in the innocent girl at his side a great passion—such a passion as only comes once in a life, a passion that if it but rise above the sensual touches immortality, a passion that could only be turned away at great peril for it would leave behind an everlasting regret.

Lucia took the pleasure that came to her without either conscious acceptance or rejection. She only knew that there was a new heaven and a new earth around her, and that this man, so much older than herself, yet so potently charming and handsome, was a wonderful revelation, a spiritual ecstasy. Yes, this is the first emotion of a young girl's love. It is a kind of piety which it is a wickedness to profane, for to such sweet innocent girls God shows great favor and the angels put their arms around them.

That night Geoffrey Gardiner returned home in an unusually happy mood. He had been very prosperous in some important business, and the pleasant excitement caused by his success filled his heart. All life's strings were set melodiously, until Maggie,

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meeting him at the top of the stairs, struck a dissonant chord of the seventh as she said:

"I thought you would like to know, sir, that there will be a gentleman to dinner and to go with the ladies afterward to the theater.

"Thank you, Maggie," he replied with a gay laugh. "I am not troubling myself about any gentleman tonight. Is Miss Ragnor present?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then all is right." In fact as he was returning home he had been arranging an evening after his own heart in which every event was to work prosperously towards the fulfillment of his great desire. But he lost all his equanimity and good humor when he reached the drawing-room. How could he help it? For under one of the brilliant gaseliers stood Lucia with heightened color and drooping eyes listening to a tall, elegant man who was talking in a confidential tone about something interesting enough to make them oblivious of his entrance. Not until he had advanced well into the room, did Lucia notice his approach. Then taking a few steps forward, she presented Geoffrey to Lord Fenwick.

And when Geoffrey heard the name of their guest, democracy sprung full-armed from his heart. What had Lord Fenwick to do in their humble drawing-room? Even his courteous, pleasant manner was an offence—a piece of impertinent condescension. He

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assumed a haughty, nonchalant air, which had the effect of causing Lucia to devote herself with double interest to Fenwick. Furthermore, his anger was greatly increased by his aunt's attentions, and his uncle's cordial welcome to the nobleman, especially as the two latter fell naturally into reminiscences of their mutual acquaintance with Colonel Ragnor.

Long before dinner was over, Goeffrey had betrayed to the wordly-wise nobleman the state of his feelings toward Lucia. Then he took the trouble to examine him more attentively—ugly, clever, honest, no tact, and no polish, his chances were just good enough to make a contention with him very interesting. Geoffrey had also been appraising his rival and had written him down wily, proud, clever, and handsome. He regarded him with stormy passion, and it was with difficulty he controlled himself during the long two hours at the dinner table.

When they left it, Maggie was waiting in the hall with opera cloaks, and Geoffrey took from her a delicate white silk wrap, and folding it around Lucia put her carefully in the carriage. She drove away without a word, yet at the last moment bent forward, smiled, and nodded to him as he stood in the open door, wondering whether he should shut himself in his own room or go and talk the matter over with Archie Galbraith.

He decided on the latter, and turning round for

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his hat and gloves saw Maggie moving about the hall. Their eyes met, and Geoffrey knew instinctively that she was aware of his grief, and sympathized with him. So he went to her and said:

"Maggie, you have many opportunities to say a word in my favor. Will you use them for me?" And he drew a sovereign from his purse and offered it to her.

"Put up your gold, Mr. Geoffrey," she answered. "The good will of an honest heart cannot be bought with it. I have spoken many a good word in season for you before this and I am not likely to see that black-eyed Englishman put you to the wall if I can help it."

"Thank you, Maggie! Then I can rely on your help?"

"In all that is fair and lawful, sir, and there is a deal fair in love, that isn't fair in any other way."

The drive to the theater was short but Oh, how full of happiness! The touch of Lord Fenwick's fingers, his whispered words, his supporting arm, the sense of the crowd, and the tender music—all these things influenced her poignantly, so that even in the night, when all was still and dark, the charming strains of Verdi's "Trovatore" wandered through her consciousness, and she found herself whispering:

> O the music! And O the way!
> That voice rang out from the donjon tower!

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It had been a feverish, fitful day, and like all such days full of events and changes that were both unforeseen and unprovided for, and Maggie had taken them into her heart with all the influences of the midnight's forebodings and threatenings. A great deal of that fine presentiment which is almost another sense, and its subtle warning, pointed not only to the destruction of her young master's hopes, but also to some vague misfortune to Lucia. The way to avoid it was as yet hid from her, but she went noiselessly to her room whispering to herself: "It is all past my comprehension, but there's One Above knows how to sort it. I thank God we are not in a Fatherless world."

The dawn of morning brought to Lucia a different train of feeling. She realized then how truly today is the disciple of yesterday. She had begun by deceiving her father in regard to Lord Fenwick, and now she found that she was expected to continue the deceit. Even Mrs. St. Clair advised her to say nothing of his lordship's visit. She thought to be a peacemaker might well excuse such a very venial fault as a temporary silence. But Lucia was neither happy nor satisfied, and both her honest nature, and her education were against deception of any kind. Still inclination is a powerful narcotic to the conscience, and she was resolved to see and to interrogate Lord Fenwick in the evening. Perhaps also she might

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have a letter from her father, which would clear her of all wrong-doing.

The letter from Colonel Ragnor came by the morning mail. It was written from Penrith, but made no explanation of the circumstances which had taken him on such an unusual journey. He merely said that his visit had been necessary "to secure some property to an old and very dear friend." He did not name Lord Fenwick, and it was evident that the Colonel was still unaware of his child's intimacy with the nobleman, while every day was making it more and more difficult for Lucia to confide in him.

In the meantime Geoffrey absented himself very much from home. To his uncle's remonstrances he answered that he could not "leave his business to dangle after any woman. Lord Fenwick had nothing else to do." To Lucia's timid offers of friendship, he gave a decided negative. His uncle, his aunt, and Lucia fell alike under his suspicion and displeasure and were accused of designs and offences of which they were quite innocent, for he was an angry and disappointed man and such men tell many lies to themselves.

So day by day Lord Fenwick gained that influence which he bent all his power to win. The many advantages which rank, wealth and beauty give, were his to choose from, while all the influences surrounding Lucia were in his favor. Half-reluctant and half-

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consenting, she knew well the point to which her life was drifting. One little word unsaid alone gave her any control over her destiny. And this word was begged from her with passionate entreaties and promises one evening just before Lord Fenwick was on the point of leaving for a week's visit to the Duke of Hamilton whose castle was about twelve miles distant.

Further concealment was then impossible. Lucia had consented only on the condition that her father sanctioned that consent, and her lover had promised immediately on his return from Hamilton to see Colonel Ragnor and ask his approval of their marriage. He pretended that there was no reason why this consent should be withheld, but he knew well that there were circumstances to be ignored or forgiven which a man like Colonel Ragnor might refuse to forgive. So he went very reluctantly to Hamilton Palace, for he was afraid any day might bring the Colonel to Glasgow to convoy his daughter home. There had been two or three letters proposing such an event and he thought the last of these offers had met its refusal in a very dissatisfied spirit. So it was with many doubts and fears he left Lucia, for he knew that an explanation was inevitable and he was not prepared for it.

Maggie, who was learned on the subject of young ladies, guessed very quickly what had happened. We

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are fearfully and wonderfully made, especially women, she thought. One said *that* that ought to know, but the better-half of the wonder was hidden from him. He should have seen the women of this generation. And while Maggie was thus musing, Lucia interrupted her thought by suddenly asking:

"Maggie, were you ever in love?"

"No, indeed, miss. I have always been known for my good common-sense, and there is nothing more foolish than to like some other person better than yourself."

"But, Maggie, what would come of the world, if every one had your uncommon sense?"

"Indeed, miss, it is none of my business to look after the world. It does not trouble its head about me."

After a short pause Lucia said, "Lord Fenwick has gone to the Duke of Hamilton's for a week."

"I hope the Duke will make much of him, miss, and keep him a year."

Lucia's answer was prevented by Mrs. St. Clair's entrance. She had been out all morning but she appeared in no way astonished at Lord Fenwick's offer and movements. Indeed, there was no reason why she should be; there had been a thorough understanding between them for some time.

She managed to persuade Lucia that it was the proper course of events for Lord Fenwick to be the

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first to inform Colonel Ragnor of his daughter's betrothal, and that as he must know the best way to approach her father, it was only fair not to embarrass his plans by her premature movements, and further, that it was best to say nothing to Mr. St. Clair and Geoffrey until the affair was sanctioned. And Lucia made the required promises, feeling as if there was really no choice in the matter and that this continual yielding to what she felt was wrong was but the natural result of her first concession.

If the knowledge that his home was freed from the presence of Lord Fenwick was any comfort to Geoffrey, he sorely needed the comfort, for he had just heard news which had given him the greatest sorrow. Archie, his friend, his brother in soul, had been ordered by the house which employed him to leave immediately for Turkey where in all probability he might be detained for some years. Geoffrey, acting on his uncle's advice, had decided to accompany his friend as far as Liverpool. For his own house had large business transactions both there and in the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and Mr. St. Clair hoped great things for Geoffrey from the change and excitement afforded by the trip.

"Besides, Geoffrey," he added, "you can come home by the Caledonian Line, and stop a day or two with my friend, Colonel Ragnor. He will do you

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good. Go and rest yourself mentally and bodily in the cool, calm shadow of his presence."

"Perhaps I may, but say nothing to my aunt or Miss Ragnor. My inclination or my courage, may fail at the last hour."

Now the greatest desire of Geoffrey was to speak to Lucia before he went away, but he was afraid to force an interview. Yet when he found her on the last evening sitting alone by the dying fire of the deserted breakfast parlor, he was unable to resist the opportunity. Indeed Lucia made it easy for him to speak as she laid her hand lightly on his arm and said kindly:

"I hear you are going to England, Mr. Gardiner."

"Yes," he answered. "I am going to Liverpool tomorrow."

"I shall likely have gone back to my home ere you return to Glasgow. Let us be friends. If I have ever grieved you in any way forgive me before we part."

Then Geoffrey went into deep waters. Great waves of passionate love rolled over his heart. His eyes filled with tears, he trembled like a reed in a great wind, though her touch was light as a snow flake.

"Lucia! Lucia!" he said. "Why did you tempt me? I must speak now, and you must listen. I know there is no hope for me, and yet I love you! I

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love you as the cold, cruel heart that you have chosen, never can love you!

"I have chosen! What do you mean, sir?"

"Miss Ragnor, the question is unworthy of you."

"Mr. Gardiner, we have been playing at cross purposes too long. Can you bear the truth, if I tell it to you?"

"Truth is easier to bear than falsehood."

"Very well. In the first place you have been cold and cross to me because I have been kind to my father's old friend, Lord Fenwick. In the second place, you are jealous of my lord's handsome person, his rank, and intellect, and you are cherishing in your heart a bitter quarrel against him—a quarrel you would be far wiser to explain away."

"Miss Ragnor, my quarrel with Lord Fenwick is a very pretty quarrel just as it stands; we should not improve it by any amount of explanations. I do not envy him a single thing he possesses, except your love—and I do not object to him as your father's friend, but as your lover."

"And why do you object to him as my lover?"

"Because I love you myself. It was perhaps a foolish and presumptuous thing to do, but yet I dared to love you as truly and deeply as an honest true-hearted gentleman should do. I had hoped also—but that is over—over and past. Tell me now, that I must henceforward forget—and I—and I, will

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try to do it. Life is too precious to be flung away for a vain hope. Now then, be truthful, Lucia! Answer me, Lucia! Shall I from this hour teach my heart to forget you?"

"The lesson will be one of your own setting, Mr. Gardiner, and I shall give you no help in the learning of it. I think you ought to be ashamed and sorry for being so rude and cross to me."

She left the room with these words and his opportunity was lost. How angry he felt at himself. He had been so hard to her timid appeal. He had behaved shamefully. He was thoroughly miserable. He would have humbled himself gladly now, but he could not find her in any of her usual resorts, and as a last effort he sent for Maggie, and after a confession that he had happened to be very rude and unkind to Miss Ragnor, he asked, "Do you know where she is, Maggie, or what she is doing?"

Maggie looked doubtingly, yet admiringly at him. "Indeed, sir," she answered. "Indeed, sir! I am a great traitor to my own sex to tell you, but if you will believe me, Mr. Gardiner, she is up in her own room crying her very eyes out."

"O Maggie! Maggie! Run and tell her how broken-hearted I am! How ashamed of myself I am."

"No, no, sir. No one shall send Maggie on a fool's errand. I am well pleased with her tears—

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better pleased than I have been with anything for a long time."

"What do you mean, Maggie?"

"Just this, Master Geoffrey, no woman cries about a man she does not care for, and now if you will be careful, and go cannily, you may toss your head yet at that English lord for all that is said and done."

"But I am going away tomorrow morning early, and what will she think of me all the time we are parted?"

"She will think better of you and more of you, if you leave her with a good reason to think of you. Some women like to rule, and some like to be ruled. Miss Ragnor is one of the latter kind. If you are fretting downstairs, she is fretting upstairs, and if you will take my advice, you will neither meddle nor make in the matter. It will sort itself before long. The tears will do Miss Ragnor good. They are the first signs of grace in her that I have seen since that black-eyed border lord threw his witchcraft o'er her."

"But there is little in what you say, Maggie—just generalities. I cannot hope on such grounds."

"Just hear the man!" exclaimed Maggie. "I wonder whatever men expect when they are in love! And as for hoping, don't do it, sir, if you fear to. I shall hope to the very last hour, and if I was not a pious lass, and a member of the Kirk in good standing, I

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would take a heavy wager on your winning the lady after all."

* * * * * * * * *

That same evening Lord Fenwick, cross and weary and disgusted with everything, drew his chair before the fire in his luxurious sleeping-room in Hamilton Palace. "At last," he muttered. "At last the farce is over. What a play it is! I wonder that we do not laugh in each other's faces." His servant standing in the shadows at the end of the room watched him with mingled hate and fear. He waited for a summons, but as it did not come, he lifted his lordship's dressing-gown and slippers, and with a shrug of contempt, advanced into his presence.

"Well, Dick, were you in the city today?" asked Lord Fenwick.

"Yes, my lord."

"At your post?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any news?"

"She was at a concert, my lord."

"Who with?"

"Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair."

"That young cub there?"

"Meaning Mr. Gardiner? No, my lord. He sails for Liverpool tomorrow morning."

"He can go to the bottom of the sea if he likes."

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"Yes, my lord. I have no objections—none whatever."

"How did she look?"

"Beautifuller than ever I see her before, and merry as she was beautiful."

"That's the way with women. Here I am, sick with anxiety and love for her sake, and she can go to a concert and laugh with a thousand other fools."

Dick made a grimace, the evil import of which might be intended for Lord Fenwick and might have a more general signification.

"You saw no signs of the old man, I suppose?"

"Meaning Colonel Ragnor, my lord? No, I never thought of looking for him in a concert hall."

"Were you not at Mr. St. Clair's house? Speak the truth, sir."

"Well, yes, my lord. I did walk up there."

"And I forbade you. Dick, you will get yourself into trouble. The Colonel would be sure to recognize you. Were there any signs of company?"

"Only in the kitchen, sir. There was a very pleasant little spread there."

"How long did you stop? What did you hear?"

"Just long enough to drink your health, my lord. The servants were talking about your chances with Miss Ragnor. Every one thought Mr. Gardiner was Miss Ragnor's favorite."

"Such nonsense! What do they know? Take

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care, Dick, you are trying to make me angry, and I shall not bear much of your evil temper tonight."

Dick looked evil enough with his lowering brow and sulky manner, and the glance which answered this remark, might have frightened a man of less pride and confidence in himself, or with less contempt for his inferiors than Lord Fenwick had. After a few minutes' silence during which Dick was divesting his master of his dress, boots and coat, Lord Fenwick said:

"I am sorry I took your advice, Dick, about this young lady. It is going to cost me a deal of suffering, if I do not get her."

"Then you must have her, my lord. I would rather she suffered than you."

Without noticing the innuendo, Lord Fenwick said: "*Must* is easily spoken. Tell me a way to *must*."

"Go and ask Colonel Ragnor for her."

"You know that he would rather see her dead, than give her to me."

"Then take her, my lord. Your grandfather always took what he wanted—lady or land."

"I am not my grandfather, Dick, and the law is above the lord in these days. Women are so deceptive. I thought from her pretty childish ways in Penrith that she would be wax in my fingers and that through her I could pay Richard Ragnor back some

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of the debt I owe him. But I have been fool enough to lose my own heart while I am far from certain whether or not I have won hers."

Dick looked steadily at the white, anxious face of his master, and seemed to find some private pleasure in the suffering he saw there. "Go and see your cousin, my lord," he said. "He is a right noble fellow, and if you humbled yourself enough and begged his pardon humbly, why he would be more likely to forgive you than not."

"I do not see the wicked sneer on your face, Dick, but I know it is there, but I do believe you have given me good advice for once, and I should not be astonished if for once I took it. And if I do take it, Richard Ragnor is capable—if any man on earth is—of the exalted charity your sarcasm intimated."

"Will your lordship go to bed now? Such good thoughts are rare drowsy herbs to sleep on."

Lord Fenwick looked at the man with a kind of admiration. He knew himself to be true to circumstances rather than facts, but Dick made no pretence of either having or desiring to have one good thought. In any piece of selfish pleasure, he had always been ready to take his part, without annoying his master with inconvenient scruples. He knew all Lord Fenwick's secret sins and sorrows, and Lord Fenwick held him in check by the strongest of all ties —the power to condemn him to prison and to death.

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Dick hated all men, but in his hatred of his master there was a kind of feudal feeling, which made him at least prefer him before others. For his ancestors had served the lords of Fenwick for many centuries, and he himself had been born in a Fenwick cottage upon Lord Fenwick's land. He had done Colonel Ragnor the most cruel of injuries, and the injurer never forgives, so he had freely hoped that his master's pursuit of Miss Ragnor would end, as most of his amours did, in sorrow and disgrace. But that the sorrow should fall on his master's head and so by reflection on his own had not been in his calculations.

Neither was it any part of his plans that Lucia Ragnor should become Lady Arthur Fenwick. He wanted no woman about his business and Lord Fenwick was his business; rather than that, he told himself he would himself see Colonel Ragnor, and in that case it would go ill with his master's hopes.

But while these two plotted against her, Lucia slept the calm innocent sleep of one for whom daily prayer is made. If she was in danger of forgetting God while mingling with the mirth and frivolity of this world, her father offered up constant supplications for her. So between her and all peril and sin, hung this cloud of incense like a shield, and its motto was, "Deliver her from evil."

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CHAPTER V

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

Love sees alas! that there are places, where he may
come too late.

COLONEL RAGNOR was very happy, for there had just come to Abbot's Rest a letter from Lucia, saying that she intended to return home almost immediately and that a very dear friend would accompany her. The Colonel had no doubt that the very dear friend was Mr. Gardiner and he was not ill pleased at the thought. For there was no need of hurry about Lucia's wedding; she might be all his own, for many happy years yet. Then he pictured her in the low, study chair she had always occupied, lifting her bright, changeful face to his, for sympathy and instruction.

Today he heard with pleasure Ann's authoritative voice scolding and giving orders. There was a cheer-

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ful stir and bustle through the house. It is incredible how still and silent a house gets in which there are no young people, and the Colonel recognized this fact that day, though he had never consciously done so before.

Ann, who had grumbled long about the lonely house, was delighted. "It was high time," she said to the parlor maid, Susy, "high time that there was some fresh carryings on," and she hoped Miss Lucia would put a stop to the way the Colonel had fallen into of going about the fells and in and out of the cottages, reading a chapter of the Gospels to this or that shepherd—talking with them, too, about old battles and old days, and worse than all, having things cooked for them right in her kitchen—hare soup, and calf-foot jelly, and the like. "I shall expect Miss Lucia to put a stop to such nonsense! And then the talking to us at night, about the sorrow and sickness he has seen in the day. I hope she will put a stop to such preachments nearly every night in a week. It is a perfect wastrie of good talk." What did people want with so many sermons? She thanked heaven *one* every Sabbath morning was enough to keep her in the way she should go.

Susy said she supposed Dixon, who went everywhere with the master, would be glad to stay at home and be rid of so much Bible reading, but Ann answered:

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"Nay, not he, my lass! I'm just tickled to death, with the sanctified airs the man puts on—but why are you standing glowering at me? Folks that can't talk and work too, should hold their tongues. Nobody ever knew my tongue to stop my work."

"I am not stopping to talk, Ann. I was listening. I thought I heard someone knocking at the door."

"Well, let them knock."

But as the knocking continued, and the Colonel also rang his bell, Ann thought it might be as well to send Dixon to see who was there. And before Dixon returned to the kitchen, she was curious enough. The arrival had evidently caused a sensation. Whoever it was, had been taken into the home sitting-room, a most unusual favor, and subsequently Dixon had dismissed the hired carriage, and carried the stranger's light luggage upstairs.

So Dixon's return to the kitchen was hailed with a very express *"Well?"*

"Well!" Dixon replied.

"Who have you taken upstairs, I would like to know?"

"I would like to know myself, Ann, but the master did not tell me."

"Did the stranger give you no name, when you opened the door to him?"

"He gave me a card, and certainly the master was glad to read what was on it."

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"And you would make me believe you yourself did not read what was on the card?"

"It was none of my business to read it, Ann."

"That is reason plenty for your doing it then. And I know as well as you do, that you are acquainted with the name of the man you took upstairs. If you like to tell me, very good; if not, you can carry your pipe outside. I'll not have the smell o' it, in my kitchen."

"Don't be so quick, mistress. I am going to tell you. The man's name is Gardiner. I mind it, because it is the name of my own honest calling."

"Gardiner!" said Ann, screwing up her mouth, "and I wonder what he will be wanting here? It's about Miss Lucia, and I'll take my oath on the same."

It certainly was Geoffrey, but he showed no disposition to speak of Miss Ragnor. All through the long, peaceful evening she was not named. The many problems which had secretly troubled, or perplexed the young man, were all talked over in the light of inspiration, and Geoffrey really thought it would be good to build a little tabernacle in these quiet glens, and escape the feverish tumult of the city.

Colonel Ragnor did not agree with him. "The country is no guarantee for a pure and peaceful life," he said. "Besides, Mr. Gardiner, there is One who knows what discipline we need, and who orders all the events of our life, so as best to supply it."

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Not until they were parting for the night, did Colonel Ragnor say—"I suppose I had better now make the arrangements for my daughter's return." The tone was cold and constrained, for the Colonel felt hurt and puzzled at Geoffrey's apparent indifference.

"Miss Ragnor's return!" replied Geoffrey. "I had no idea such an event was in contemplation."

"But I received a letter from her this morning, saying that she would return home in two weeks, and that a friend would call on me, with whom I must make some definite arrangements. I supposed you might be that friend."

Geoffrey sat silent and troubled for a few moments, then he sadly replied:

"No, I cannot claim that privilege. I am sure that Lord Fenwick is the person referred to."

"Whom did you say, Mr. Gardiner?" But before Geoffrey could repeat the name, Colonel Ragnor had risen to his feet, staggered towards the bell rope, and then fallen senseless on the floor. Geoffrey, shocked and frightened, alarmed the household. Ann knew at once what to do, and how to do it, but it was some hours before perfect consciousness returned. As soon, however, as he was able to speak, he desired everyone to leave the room but Mr. Gardiner and Ann. Then turning a face stern and white to them, he said:

"Mr. Gardiner, tell me again *who* my child has

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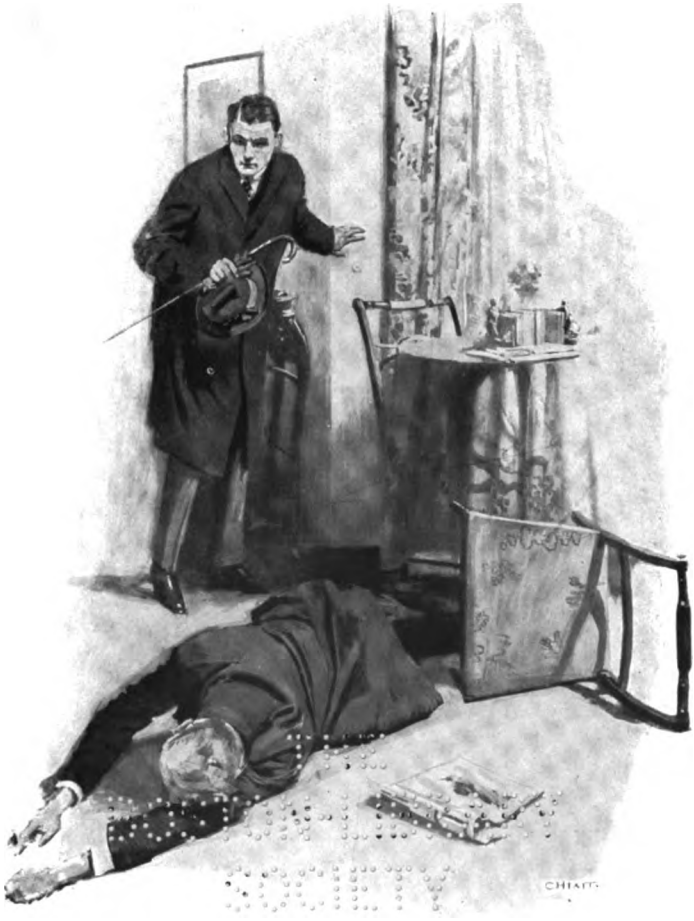

"Before Geoffrey could repeat the name, Colonel Ragnor had . . . fallen senseless on the floor"

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chosen for her friend. Ann, stay a moment, and listen to the name."

"Indeed!" answered Mr. Gardiner, "I know not what evil I am doing. I did but say that Lord Fenwick was Miss Ragnor's friend—lover, I believe I may truly say."

Ann listened aghast and terrified, and then passionately ejaculated, "Oh, my poor bairn! Oh, my poor innocent bairn! Where were all the good angels when he was let come your way?"

"How long has this intercourse been going on? Tell me truly, Mr. Gardiner."

"Since before Christmas," said Geoffrey in a reluctant tone.

"And she never named him to me. I must be dreaming. Make haste, Ann, I must take the first train to Glasgow."

"A very unlikely thing, sir. It is clean impossible for you to go to Glasgow until the morning. You will have to take my advice this time, and if you had done so before, it had been better for you. I have told you, and told you, to have no words with that black-hearted ne'er-do-well! What for did you meet him at Penrith?"

"I had something good to do for an old friend, and I could not do it without his signature."

"Lawyers are the only folk that could talk with the like of him. And why did you not tell poor Miss

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Lucia long ago about the handsome devil? If you had done your duty, and trusted your child, this unchance meeting had never taken place."

"If this blow had come from any other hand—but that Lucia—that my own daughter!"

"Of course! That is always the way, any pain but this pain, any loss but this loss, any trouble but the one we have sorted out for ourselves. And Miss Lucia! Poor, white lamb! *She* must bear the weight of other folk's folly."

"O Ann! O Ann! Do not blame me!"

"But I do blame you, sir. You knew well, that the wolf was always watching your sheepfold. Has he not done it before to the very height of his evil purpose? Why did you not warn her that night at Penrith? Why did you meet him there, in the very house that your daughter was staying at? Why did you not forbid your daughter to enter any room in which you had company? You mostly make me think that your own pride in your daughter's beauty led you to risk the innocent child."

"O Ann! Ann! How can you say such cruel ——"

"You wanted him to see that though he had not a child to his great name, you had a little daughter that was the beauty of the Lake District! Oh, I know how men plume themselves on what some poor woman died to give them! Forgive me, Colonel!

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Forgive me! I cannot blame Miss Lucia! I won't. Everybody will be down on her. I must say a word for a dear little lady that cannot speak for herself!" and she darted at Geoffrey—who was standing silent and distressed—a look full of scorn and indignation.

As soon as she went back to the kitchen, she sent Dixon off to bed. If the master needed anything she could get it. Her face was gray and rigid, her lips tightly pressed together. No one could doubt that she was suffering intensely.

Geoffrey had asked and obtained permission to sit with the Colonel, for he felt that there were now some things to be said in his own behalf which the Colonel ought to hear. Shocked as he had been by the revelation of Lucia's duplicity, he still loved her, and it was intolerable to him that trouble should come to her by his means. He hardly saw yet what it was best for him to do, yet one thing was evident. He must confess to Colonel Ragnor his own love for Lucia. This he did in a frank, honorable manner, adding that he had from the first appearance of Lord Fenwick supposed that a marriage between Lucia and that nobleman, would be every way agreeable to Colonel Ragnor.

Colonel Ragnor's reply was short and uncertain, but in it Geoffrey found one faint hope. For he most emphatically declared that a marriage between

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Lord Fenwick and Miss Ragnor was a thing impossible. If so, then the lists were yet open, and the prize to be won.

Both gentlemen left Abbot's Rest the next morning, the Colonel for Glasgow, and Geoffrey for Edinburgh. The latter was glad to leave Abbot's Rest, for Ann with that unreasonableness which some of the best and shrewdest exhibit, confounded the bearer of the evil news with the news itself and she had made him both see and feel it. Yet if he had been capable of indulging resentment against the sorrowful old woman, it would have faded before his last sight of her, rocking her body backward and forward and weeping in distressed abandon. The Colonel saw it also, but he answered Geoffrey's look with a negative shake of the head. "Nothing," he said, "would offend Ann more than to notice her trouble or attempt to comfort her. She knows where to go for comfort."

As it was only four o'clock when the Colonel reached Glasgow, he determined to go at once to Mr. St. Clair's office, and have the explanation over there, unembarrassed by the presence of ladies. He would then be better able to estimate the strength of the affection existing between his child and his enemy and decide on the course it was wisest and best to pursue.

At first Mr. St. Clair's surprise and pleasure was

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so great, that he did not perceive that all was not right.

"Why, Robert," he said joyfully, "I am the luckiest fellow! Only think, Lord Fenwick takes dinner with us tonight! He is some relation of yours, is he not?"

"A sort of a cousin—we do not count it. And I do not think he will dine with us tonight, Ralph. Shut the door. I have much to say to you, and you must excuse me if I ask you a question first. How is it that I have never been informed of that man's domestication in your house, and of his attentions to my poor little Lucia?"

"I do not think, Robert, that I ever considered such a thing necessary. I supposed that Lucia kept you informed of all the incidents of her life here."

"Only last night did I hear of his familiarity here, and I was so shocked that I lost consciousness."

"Why so shocked? Upon my word I was going to congratulate you. The connection is a very splendid one for Lucia."

"Pity me, Ralph. And pity her also, if she has the heart to love him when she has heard the truth. For the God who forbids a kid to be seethed in its mother's milk, will surely frown on a child who should marry her mother's murderer."

"Take care, Robert! Take care, you are making a grave charge."

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"A very true one. Alas, it is a cruel story. Will you hear it now?"

"Why should you tell it twice? Lucia must hear it, and Mrs. St. Clair also. Lord Fenwick is now at my house. Let us go there at once." So they took the Colonel's cab and drove to Mr. St. Clair's house, speaking only in monosyllables on the way.

In the hall they met Mrs. St. Clair, splendidly dressed, and with a look of reproach on her face.

"I know I am late, Helen," said Mr. St. Clair gravely. "This gentleman is my friend, Colonel Ragnor."

She had known him at once, and without any introduction. His resemblance to Lucia had been sufficient identification; and she would have called Lucia on the moment, but her husband by a gesture forbade it. Drawing her away he pointed out to Colonel Ragnor a door standing partly open from which there issued a warm splendor of light and the soft cadence of a rippling laugh.

Lucia and Fenwick were sitting there unconscious of any intrusion. They were on a low ottoman and the proud, handsome head Colonel Ragnor knew so well bent with a love that was almost adoration to the bewitching face lifted to his own. Lucia said something in a low voice and he answered it with a kiss. The sight was intolerable even to the well controlled passions of Colonel Ragnor. An angry ex-

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clamation followed and as Lord Fenwick hurriedly rose the Colonel threw himself between his child and her lover. For a few minutes everything but the sense of his great wrong was forgotten. It was no longer the soldier and the earl—it was the injured and the injurer, it was a father standing between his daughter and dishonor!

Holding the earl in the grip of a bulldog, and noticing nothing of his daughter's caressing entreaties, he said with a face flaming with passion:

"You understand why I am here, Arthur. Is not the world wide enough? Release my daughter. Leave the room at once."

By a powerful effort Lord Fenwick controlled himself, and in tones of entreaty said, "Robert, before you utter another word, remember my father, and the love of our own youth. Spare me and spare your own child the misery which you have come to inflict."

"If my own life could go as an atonement and you and Lucia be innocent—I would not withhold it—God knows!"

"You are only asked to forgive the past."

"As far as it relates to myself, I forgive it."

"Then give me your daughter. Give me my wife."

"How dare I give you Lucia! It is to sin against God, and every holy affection. I cannot! I will not! I will not even permit you to speak to her

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again! If you have any honor left, you will consider the dismissal final."

"I shall take my dismissal only from the lips which accepted me. Lucia! Sweet Lucia! Speak to me!"

"Father! Father! How am I to answer? What has Arthur done? What has Arthur done?"

"He participated in your mother's death—in reality, caused it."

"You lie, Richard Ragnor! I never hurt a hair of her mother's head! Prove your words! If I had you in France this hour, I would make you prove it to your sword's hilt."

"Bombast!" echoed the Colonel. "You could not. You are morally guilty of the death of all the Spencer family, father, son and daughter." Then loosening his grip upon Lord Fenwick, he said in a voice of command, "Go! Leave this house at once. You are unworthy to enter it. There is no more to be said."

"There is much more to be said!" Then turning to Lucia he added, "My darling, you should have heard this story from my lips, when I begged to tell it to you. Now those that hate me will be my accusers. No one will say a word in my defence. Therefore I claim the right to defend myself. I will receive my sentence only from those sweet lips which promised to be my wife."

Lucia rose during this speech, and regardless of

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her father's efforts to stay her, went to her lover's side. Standing there, she said:

"Let me stand here once more, father. If you have told the truth, it is the very last time and I want to acknowledge now that at the very beginning of this acquaintance I was to blame. I met Arthur when I was out riding in Penrith and I never told you."

"Plotting deceiver!" said the Colonel furiously. "You sent your lawyer to detain me with a pretended atonement for past wrong so that you might have free course to plot and plan for future injury."

"No, father! I was the deceiver, not Arthur. He told me he was coming to Glasgow to see me, and I, though I divined there was trouble and dislike between you and him, did not forbid it. In all that has followed, I have been as much to blame as Arthur, and whatever of sorrow or disappointment I must now suffer, is the just result of my want of honest truthfulness."

She was weeping passionately, and Lord Fenwick was moved beyond all control. He led her to a sofa, and then almost staggering towards the Colonel, he said, "Is there nothing I can do to obliterate the past? Forgive me, Robert! I have suffered more than you have."

"I give you my full forgiveness. It is impossible that I should give you my daughter."

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"I do not want the one without the other. I offer you an opportunity to do a Christ-like act. You are incapable of it. You have destroyed my last hope. Let me pass you. You have your revenge. Lucia, sweetest and dearest! Farewell!"

When he reached the hall a servant came hastily forward. "Call me a carriage," he said. The voice was forced and unnatural, but before the carriage arrived at the door, he had calmed himself sufficiently to give the man an elaborate apology for Mrs. St. Clair.

Lucia would listen to no explanations and no sympathy; she begged only that she might be allowed to go to her room. And it was evident Maggie had been expecting her, for all the house knew the Colonel had brought trouble into it, and with a native consideration the little maid had left the room unlit save for such fitful gleams as were produced by the blazing fire.

No word was spoken while the rich satin robe was removed, and one by one all the graces of her toilet laid aside. Then she motioned Maggie away and in the solitude of her room faced the first great sorrow of her life. And some good angel doubtless brought her the peace and courage she needed, for Maggie returned to the room a couple of hours afterwards found Lucia in that blessed sleep with which kind nature soothes the sorrows of the young.

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There comes a day, alas! when grief banishes sleep and nature has no balm for woe.

When she awoke, Maggie was quietly folding away the clothing she had worn. She watched her for a few minutes silently and then suddenly resuming all her usual manner, said:

"Sit down, Maggie. I want to talk to you for you are honest and would not tell a lie to please anyone. Do the servants know what has happened?"

"Yes, miss."

"What do they say?"

"They are sorry for Lord Fenwick. Tom said that though he looked like a ghost he held himself like a prince and though he could scarcely speak he was as polite as ever."

"What did you say, Maggie?"

"Nothing, miss. It is not Maggie's way to speak slightly of anyone, when their back is at the wall."

"How did you feel then?"

"Sorry for him, but glad for you."

"Why glad for me, Maggie? Say all you think."

"Well, then, miss, you two were not sorted for each other. I always felt uneasy about you, felt like watching you when you were in his company, as if there was some unknown danger hiding near by."

"Why were you sorry for him?"

"Because, though I don't know what he has done to put himself out of your notice, I am very sure he

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has fretted sorely about it all the weeks he has been coming here—that ought to stand somewhat to his credit, but no one will count it to him, and forbye he loved you so well, that the losing of you will go near to breaking the proud, passionate heart of him. I never was as near liking him as now, when I have doubtless seen the last of him."

"This is the very first time, Maggie, that you have said a word in his favor. Well, Maggie, this is our very last talk on this subject."

"I am very willing, miss, and though I am not wishing his lordship any ill, I am well contented that he did not win his chief desire."

"Good night, Maggie! I shall always remember how true and honest-hearted you are. I could not pray for myself tonight, but you will remember both me—and him."

"I'll not forget you, Miss Ragnor, but you must not trust to the prayer of others. There is this compact between praying and sinning—praying makes us quit sinning—or else sinning makes us quit praying. And I think if you would go your own self to God this sorrowful night, you would find that the love that is great enough for all heaven, is sufficient for your sad heart. I am not speaking without knowledge, miss—I have known myself

"The stress of nights, that hoped for nothing from the morn."

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CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT ABBOT'S REST

I only know we loved in vain;
I only feel—farewell! farewell!

THE first great sorrow of life strikes us with a kind of amazement. We cannot credit its hopelessness; somehow or some way we feel sure there is escape from it, for when the heart is young, nothing is too hard for it. So even amid the first crushing sense of her disappointment, Lucia felt nothing like despair. The course of true love never did run smooth but things generally came right in the end, and she would not relinquish this possibility. In spite of trouble she slept heavily, but the sleep of sorrow is not gracious and its awakening is terrible. For in such dark and heavy sleep we meet with dreams.

From the soul's subterranean depths upborne,
As from an infinitely distant land—
Sad airs, and floating echoes, that convey
A melancholy into all our day.

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It was the same world and yet a changed world, the same life with the motive taken out of its duties and the flavor out of its pleasures. Lucia's first request was to be allowed to face the new experience alone. Not even Maggie ventured to speak to the motionless figure which with closed eyes was silently lifting its cross, and gathering strength in doing it.

Colonel Ragnor suffered scarcely less than his daughter, but even yet had it been just or prudent he would have preferred to have kept silence concerning his sorrow. This was, however, no longer possible, and the following evening while Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair listened in sympathetic silence, he rose and, walking up and down with steps that kept time with the passion and suffering in his voice, said:

"You know, Ralph, that my father and mother died in the East Indies, and that my uncle the Earl of Westmoor filled their place. You know what a warm friendship existed then between my cousin Arthur and myself, and that in those happy days when we were at Oxford together, there was not an unkind thought between us.

"It was one morning during the long vacation, the earl entered Arthur's private parlor, and found Arthur and myself idling over a late breakfast. 'I'll tell you what, young men,' he said, 'it is high time you both tried public life a little. Now the lieges of Kenton have sent for me to make some necessary

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speeches at the opening of their new Town Hall. Suppose you go in my place.'

" 'Ready to do so, father,' replied Arthur. 'I will eat the dinners, and Robert shall make the speeches,' and it was in this happy mood that the arrangements for a journey which was to end so tragically were made.

"In a day or two we found ourselves the guests of a Mr. Isaac Spencer, a wealthy and enterprising citizen whom my uncle had directed us to be very attentive to. He had a delightful family, consisting of an only son in good practice as a physician, a most lovely daughter, and a maiden sister of Mr. Spencer's who had taken charge of his children and his house for many years. I soon found myself deeply in love with Vera Spencer, and at the end of a few weeks, she promised me her hand. However, when I spoke to Mr. Spencer, I met a cold and positive denial with a request to omit in the future my visits at the Spencer house. But Vera was faithful and vowed she would be my wife or remain Vera Spencer all her life. So for the pleasure of a smile or a glance as we met on the streets, I was content to idle away week after week in the little town.

"Arthur in the meantime had grown cooler and cooler to me, and I noticed, with anger and jealousy, that he visited at the Spencer house continually—that he escorted Vera wherever she went, and that

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he flattered her father and brother in every way that his rank and wealth made it easy for him to do. O Ralph, I began to find it very hard to bear his triumphant, insolent manner, and our coolness ended finally in some angry words. Yet I was still so anxious to avoid a positive quarrel, that I resolved to leave Kenton as soon as I could get a farewell interview with Vera and make her understand my plans.

"But for three weeks I could not obtain a glimpse of her, and I finally called on Mary Dallam, her aunt, who had always been favorable to my suit. She told me that Mr. Spencer had taken Vera to Kendal, and that it was likely their visit might last several weeks.

"I left her sick at heart, fearing I knew not what, and my uncomfortable feeling was turned into one of positive anger by meeting Hal Spencer on the street and receiving from him a cool stare instead of a return of my recognition. I knew the young man had been greatly elated by Fenwick's friendship, and if I had possessed the experience then I do now, I should have paid but little attention to his rudeness; but at that time it gave me great annoyance, and I determined to go at once to Kendal and watch the movements of my opponents. In a short time I succeeded in obtaining an interview with Vera's maid, and she told me that Lord Fenwick

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visited her mistress constantly, but she also declared Vera Spencer to be unfalteringly faithful to the promise she had given me. So I waited in Kendal until I met Vera several times, and came to a perfect understanding about our future hopes and plans. Then also, we agreed upon a signal which should call me to her help if affairs became desperate.

"To prepare for such an emergency, I opened up a little home among the hills outside the town of Ulverston, and I spent my time and money in making it as comfortable and pretty as it was possible to make it. My own mother had once lived in it, and the empty shelves and pots of her little greenhouse still remained in their places. I had the glasshouse refilled, and all the faded cretons recovered, and put warm fur rugs everywhere, and if the day was chilly, I had fires lit in case the message came on a stormy day; and every day, all the days long, I spent my time in going from room to room, and in watching for the token that never came.

"I was nearly in despair when I received one morning a letter containing an ivy leaf. I knew what that symbol meant, and I traveled night and day until I reached Kenton, for Vera was now at home again. How eagerly I clasped the little cloaked, veiled figure that met me weeping. All the preparations for her marriage with Lord Fenwick were progressing, her father was imperative, her brother

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watched her constantly, and her lover had made up his mind to pay no regard either to her personal aversion, or her appeals to his honor and declared affection. Ann had also deserted her, having married Lord Fenwick's valet, and 'O Robert!' she cried, 'indeed I need your help and comfort now!'

"The next day we were privately married in Ulverston church, and you can imagine the fury of her father and brother. As for Arthur he made no sign as to how he took his disappointment. And in the absolute seclusion of our Lancashire home, no sound of trouble reached us but through Mary Dallam's letters. These as time went on became more and more a cause of anxiety. Lord Fenwick had gone to London and Hal Spencer had accompanied him. Then we heard that Hal had abandoned his profession, and given himself up to a recklessly dissipated life; and that Mr. Spencer, disappointed in his plans both for his son and daughter, had become morose and very hard to live with. The next news was still worse. Hal had been put in prison for debt and his father, in order to release him, had been compelled to seriously embarrass his own resources.

"When we had been married for nearly a year Ann came to us. She had walked all the way from Westmoreland and was in a state of extreme exhaustion. She had left her husband forever, and no

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one who heard her story could blame her. She settled down to our quiet life and took entire charge of our domestic affairs and I was glad of it, for Vera had been failing for some months, and I was anxious about her.

"We never named Lord Fenwick, except when a letter came from Mary Dallam. Then it was impossible for us not to consider the ruinous course on which he was leading Hal Spencer. For the nobleman's vast wealth hardly felt the expense, which was taxing the utmost means of old Mr. Spencer; and Hal could not stop, where his cool, calm patron found it easy to do so.

"One afternoon I was sitting reading to my wife, who had some needlework in her hand. She was unusually gay and had been able to go through the house and look at the pretty wreaths and crosses Ann had hung up to greet the coming Christmas festival. All at once we heard the *rat-tat* of the postman. Ralph, it was a peculiar knock. I do not know how, or why, but it startled every heart. Vera looked up with a pale face and parted lips and said, '*Now!*' and I with a strange, uneasy feeling went to meet Ann, coming with lagging footsteps.

"I sent Ann to her mistress and took the letter to my own room to read. The writing was unfamiliar, and the letter was not addressed to my wife, but to myself. It was from Mr. Spencer's lawyers and con-

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tained terrible news—Hal Spencer had been murdered at Lord Fenwick's door—murdered by his lordship's servant.

"It came out at the inquest, that the poor boy, driven to the greatest distress for want of money and his father's positive refusal to help him any more, had gone to Fenwick as a last resort. But for some time his lordship had been shy and cold, frequently denying himself to Hal, when Hal knew well that he was in the house. This afternoon, however, his necessities were beyond rejection; and he refused to believe the servant who was perhaps more insolent than he had any authority to be. At any rate Hal became very angry, and struck the fellow. He immediately returned the blow, pushing Hal at the same time down the flight of stone steps. It is probable that he never breathed again. Two men who had witnessed the whole dispute gave information to the authorities, and the papers on his person served to identify him.

"Mr. Spencer went himself to London to bring back the remains of the son who had so cruelly blasted all his hopes and who had himself so cruelly perished. He looked broken-hearted at the funeral, and immediately after the ceremony, went to his room—and shot himself.

"I decided to tell Vera that her brother was dead and her father seriously ill, and she understood at

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once that I must go to him, but I did not think it necessary to tell the particulars of the tragedy, because in our isolated position, they would probably remain unknown, until she was in a condition to bear them better.

"It was a sad and anxious journey to Kenton, and I only arrived there a few hours before Mr. Spencer's death. The great stately house which I remembered brilliant with light and noisy with life was dark, silent, solemn—the black shadow of its former self; and Mary Dallam, in the pressure of this overwhelming calamity, forgot to express either surprise or pleasure. She only said, 'You here, Robert! That is well. All will be over soon.'

"Mr. Spencer's affairs were in a ruined condition—the very house being heavily mortgaged to Lord Fenwick, and this was the beginning of the end; though it did not come in its bitterness until the fifteenth of the next March. On that day I went in the afternoon to the village after some household necessity. Half-way there, I met a man whose evil countenance seemed familiar to me. I watched him down the hill with a strange misgiving and resolved to return as soon as possible. But I was stopped on the road by a boy, who had been thrown from his horse, it being necessary to turn aside in order to procure him the help needed.

"As I was returning homeward, I saw Ann run-

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ning wildly to meet me. My heart sank like lead. She came nearer, touched me sharply, and said, 'Haste you home, sir! I'm away for the doctor.'

"I found my wife on a couch, but quite insensible, and to all appearance dead. I do not remember anything of that night, but its fear and suffering. My daughter was born next day, but I could scarcely rejoice, and I did not dare to hope. It was not until after the birth of the child, I remembered to ask Ann what caused the sudden illness of her mistress.

" '*That*,' she answered, pointing to a newspaper lying under the sofa. I took it up, and examined it. It was directed to my wife, and a long paragraph headed 'The Late Tragedy in Kenton' was conspicuously marked round with red ink. It contained a malicious account of our marriage, Hal's murder, and Mr. Spencer's suicide, and was so cleverly written that the two last events were made to appear the natural results of the first. I knew who the writer was well enough.

"Before her death, Vera made me promise to forgive her enemy, and I have tried hard to do so. I thought it best, too, that so much sin and sorrow should be buried with the generation which gave it birth, and so in spite of Ann's urging, I never named it to Lucia. There are some pecuniary wrongs which I pass over, and I had resolved to avoid all future intercourse with Fenwick. But just before Lucia

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came to you, I received a letter from Mary Dallam complaining that the new agent of the Fenwick property was going to eject her from her old home. For her sake, I went to Penrith to see Fenwick, and even then he had the best of the bargain from a financial point of view. Unfortunately, he saw Lucia in Penrith. You know the rest, my friends."

At this point the Colonel sat down and ceased speaking. There was a marked and not very sympathetic silence. Mrs. St. Clair's eyes were dropped upon the trimmings of her dress, and Mr. St. Clair could not find any beginning to the observations he wished to make. But the silence finally became so tense, and the Colonel's look of astonishment so painful, that Mr. St. Clair blundered out the only decision he had been able to come to.

"I think, dear Robert, you have been judging your cousin altogether by *feeling;* we cannot make a fair estimate unless we bring justice into court. Pure scoundrel and pure angel dwell not on this earth. In humanity there is no such thing as a straight line or an unmixed color."

Then Mrs. St. Clair, taking the Colonel's hand between her own, said, "My dear Colonel, Ralph means, that the court in which you have tried Lord Fenwick is too much like a drumhead court. Feeling and honor are not legitimate witnesses in a common court of law and after all, that is the standard by

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which the world will rate his lordship. And I really think, if tried by English common law, Lord Fenwick would be acquitted as guiltless on every count."

"You heard him ask me to forgive him."

"Yes, he has been a false friend to you, but we do not pass the death penalty on a false friend. Come and let us have some dinner, and we will finish the argument afterwards."

Mr. St. Clair rose at the invitation, and the Colonel was obliged to follow, and somehow Mrs. St. Clair persuaded him to eat a very good dinner, while she took great care to send Lucia all the most delicate luxuries at the table.

"Tell her, Maggie," she said, "to eat everything I have sent her. I will be up to see her soon."

So dinner was eaten to a discussion on a political subject affecting the army about which the Colonel was so deeply interested—it was easy to get him much excited—and Lord Fenwick was not named at the bountiful dinner that had really been prepared in his honor. But when the gentlemen had their cigars by the drawing-room fire Mr. St. Clair said:

"Robert, my dear old friend, let me tell you how the world will look at your great criminal—for I think it a pity that our Lucia should be made to suffer more than is right and necessary. In the first place, no one but Hal Spencer is to blame for the young man's death. Of his own free will he went

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into gambling hells, and other places of dissipated resort. He played to great excess and ruined himself. Then he asked Fenwick to lend him money, and Fenwick, as most men would have done, refused; he quarreled with Fenwick's servant and struck him; then the servant struck back and unintentionally killed Spencer. Just a common tragedy from first to last. But Fenwick was not to blame. Any jury in England would acquit him. Then Mr. Spencer goes to London for his son's body, and after its burial he comes home and shoots himself. Now how is this to be laid to Lord Fenwick's charge?"

"Lord Fenwick had heavy mortgages on all he possessed. He was ruined."

"It was Hal's fault, I suppose," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"Yes, Hal had gambled it away to Lord Fenwick and others."

"Father and son both knew what they were doing, I should think."

"Do all these excuses alter the crime, Ralph?" asked the Colonel.

"Not in the court of Heaven, but verdicts are rendered here according to Blackstone, not according to Moses or Christ. You have not named Mr. Spencer's daughter running away to marry the man *she* chose."

"She came to me. Her father wished to marry her to Lord Fenwick. We had been engaged for some months."

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"Then all this trouble followed his daughter's disobedience and flight to you, Robert?"

"Yes, but Vera was not responsible for it."

"Yet she might have saved her father and brother —perhaps—perhaps—" and Mr. St. Clair gazed thoughtfully into some far distant vista of the past. The Colonel grew restless and looked unhappy, and finally asked if Fenwick was also innocent of his wife's death.

"He told you tonight positively that he had nothing to do with that piece of dirty work."

"That is to be inquired into. I believe he wrote the newspaper article. Ann admits that her discarded husband brought it to my house."

"Perhaps he also wrote it, Robert."

"He cannot write."

"Well, Robert, it was a miserably inhuman piece of business, but it was not what the law calls a crime; and Fenwick could not know the day and hour of your wife's maternity, for you yourself did not, or you would hardly have been out of the house."

"It seems that I have nothing to complain of"; and the Colonel lifted his hands and covered his face. Then Ralph St. Clair threw his arm across his friend's shoulder and said a few words to him that nobody heard, while Mrs. St. Clair rose, and with a heavy sigh declared she was going to see Lucia.

"When I think," she exclaimed, "of all the beauti-

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ful clothing chosen, of the splendid jewels being reset, of the grand old castle redecorated for the expected wedding, when I think of the Court of London and the travel abroad, I have no sympathy left for anyone but Lucia Ragnor and Arthur Fenwick."

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CHAPTER VII

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM

THE important events of life do not bear talking about. We rob them by conversation of that element of greatness and vagueness which alone enables us to bear them. So Lucia instinctively refused to discuss her lover. His exit had been dramatic enough, and talking could not bring hope or promise into it. She had one short conversation with Mrs. St. Clair, but with her father she ignored the subject. The worst that could happen to her love-life had happened; she must try and forget its charm and joyousness and turn her thoughts to other objects. So she went in and out, preparing for her return home but never mentioning Lord Fenwick. Yet she was watching, watching! All the day long her soul was going to the window, and all the day long she was whispering to it, "Tomorrow, perhaps! Tomorrow!"

In less than a week all was ready for their return to Abbot's Rest, and it was the general opinion that

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it was a pity the Colonel had ever come to Glasgow. "So much trouble some men make!" said the cook. "He's as pleasant spoken as can be, but what's the good of that when he acts as he shouldn't?" The butler said, "Colonel Ragnor isn't much on tips—military men being naturally saving—but being the father of a handsome girl, it wasn't fair to fool him behind his back, even if the second-hander were a lord."

Maggie corrected him by declaring there had been no fooling, nor intention of fooling. Lord Fenwick was right to make sure of the lady's consent before he asked for her father's.

Their last evening was to be a theatrical one, but there was little enthusiasm about it, and Mrs. St. Clair was dressed with less than her usual taste. Lucia, however, had never looked so exquisitely fair and lovely. They had scarcely taken their seats when a stirring Scotch march from the orchestra and a certain sense of "approach" arrested their attention. Then the gentlemen of a certain club entered, and their leader was Lord Arthur Fenwick. Lucia did not appear astonished and Mrs. St. Clair suspected that she had known all about this special entertainment and had probably discussed it with her lover. At any rate he turned at once to the St. Clair's box and bowed deeply to the ladies in it. And Lucia slightly rose in her lily-like beauty, and returned the

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courtesy with a smile that seemed to bridge the space between them.

"How handsome he is tonight!" said Mrs. St. Clair, and Lucia looked at him again. They could not speak a word to each other, and yet they did speak, and so clearly that both went home satisfied.

The next morning the end of the visit came—came with a little sense of satiety; and all felt that it would be well to separate and give their friendship time to grow. Lucia threw herself among the cushions when the last handkerchief waving was over, and whispered, "What a relief!"

"Yet, father, they were very kind to me."

"It was a kindness with a double aspect as far as the lady was concerned."

Then the Colonel closed his eyes and appeared to sleep, and Lucia communed with her own heart and was still until the Colonel roused himself and said, "How grand are these encircling hills! They are like a great host at rest. Often I have pitched my camp in just such Himalayan quarters. We will step out at Carlyle and have a plate of fine Cheviot mutton. We shall be at our own little station by four o'clock."

"I hope Dixon will bring the victoria. I like the open drive through the hills, especially if we have sunshine."

It was not a cheerful afternoon, but it is often the commonplace which reveals to us the divine; and as

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Lucia looked around and recognized the comfortable familiarity of the scene, there sprang up in her heart a little rill of unaccustomed prayer. How good was *her own home! Her own father! Her own country!* Yes, even *her own servants and horses!* Such unusual prayers are very refreshing to the soul. It tastes in them a feeling new and full of human love.

Though not cheerful, it was a typical spring afternoon just drawing toward sunset. Banks of dark clouds drifted rapidly over a gray sky. On the southern slopes towards the valley they were playing football, and the rise of the ball could be seen; the air was clear and still. In all the valleys or shielded bents there was the great industry of

> Ploughing and sowing and rural affairs,
> Rural economy, rural astronomy,
> Homely morality, labor and thrift

going busily on. But the heights among which Abbot's Rest stood had never been tilled. Their great, bare backs had felt neither plow nor harrow, only the wild winds had swept them, and the sheep nibbled them smooth. The low, melancholy bleating of their wandering flocks infected the air, and for a few minutes the Colonel did not speak, not even when they passed a large mansion of rough granite in a grove of decaying trees, with the notable peculiarity of a high roof of red sandstone. Lucia looked at this

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house with particular and evident curiosity, but before she could make up her mind what questions to ask, they came in sight of Abbot's Rest, which burst into the glow of firelight and candlelight as soon as the carriage could be seen rising the last hill; and as they entered its gates the linnets' sweet babbling was in every bush.

* * * * * * * * *

One day leads to another, and the next three or four days were passed in the not unpleasant trouble of unpacking and packing away Lucia's many new and beautiful garments. Then the house was in disorder and the weather was dark and stormy, and Lucia found life very hard to bear. She had had a long talk with Ann during their occupation, but it had not comforted her. Ann regarded Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair's opinions as a straight direct evasion of the Law of God, nor would she believe in any of the virtues which Lucia had found in Lord Arthur Fenwick. "Your mother did not approve of him, miss," she said, "and that ought to be enough for you."

"It is not enough, Ann. Mother was in love with my father. My father was very unfortunate to mother. Their angels must have been set against their marriage from the moment they met."

"No doubt they were. And I am quite sure your angel is against your marrying Lord Fenwick. You'll have trouble enough if you try it."

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"I shall try it."

"Your father will forbid it."

"Words will not alter me."

"What do you mean, miss?"

"Just what I say."

"Well then, miss, you'll excuse me if I talk no more on this subject, for or against. The Colonel was right twenty years ago. I think he was quite right in going to Glasgow to save you ten days ago."

Then with an air of great offence and trouble Ann went downstairs, and Lucia stood silently watching the dreary landscape. "I had no time to think!" she muttered. "Not a minute's private conversation with Arthur. I had to act with cruel haste—it is the old, old tragedy of mutual misunderstanding all through. Oh, how unhappy I am!"

Then through the swirling gray mist there burst forth the sweetest, clearest snatch of song that mortal ever heard, and Lucia bent forward and searched into the dim from which it came. And as she did so, the same joyous breve of melody greeted her, and she saw sitting on the bare branch of a near-by cherry tree

> The bird that man loves best,
> The pious bird with scarlet breast,
> The little English robin

and her heart was glad, and she laughed softly and thought, "It is a good sign. I will be happy now and

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hope to be happy very soon. I have not seen father since luncheon. I must go and tell him about the robin.

When she opened the parlor door she found the Colonel lying on a wide, soft couch fast asleep, and in the dim daylight he looked strangely white and old. Was he dreaming of sorrow and learning how to suffer? For a moment she stood regarding him, then a touch of her hand so light as to be only felt by the arm of the inner man awakened the sleeper.

"Lucia," he said tenderly, "is it you? I believe I was dreaming of you, and it is late—what have you been doing?"

"I have been helping Ann to carefully put away some beautiful clothing I do not require at present" —and she smiled so sweetly he could make neither dissent nor denial. He just let the sunshine of it fill his heart with satisfaction.

Then she asked, "Have you seen the new tenant of the Dower House, father?"

And he answered, "He has been with me all the afternoon. You missed something, Lucia."

"Oh, it will be common enough before the month is over."

"No, nor in a lifetime. He is a remarkable man."

"Handsome?"

"Yes, and no. He is large in bulk, ruddy in look,

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and radiant with life. But he is a peasant, though he carries his head high with something more than a courtier's dignity, and he is the most widely educated man I ever met."

"I am glad of that. How does a peasant come to be so well educated?"

"Some nobleman observed his abilities, and sent him to Kendal Blue Coat School, and afterwards to Oxford, where he took orders with high honors. He was seventeen years in his patron's immense library, and so arranged it that it became both famous and of great value. He came here, he says, of his own choice and request—just as I did. He saw the hills and the waters, the valleys, the larch woods, and the people—these things bred in him a great content, and he wanted to live among them."

"How strange!"

"I that have lived in courts and camps and great cities did the same, Lucia. These plaided shepherds, whom you have scarcely noticed, are not common men. They live in the clouds, they have an aërial creed, and they believe in angels. Perhaps they have always done so; you will remember that no one but shepherds saw the great company of angels who were singing and praising God on the first Christmas morning."

"You are wrong, father. I have noticed the shepherds. I have three or four friends among them.

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One told me when I went to Glasgow that I was going into love danger."

"When a girl is young and beautiful she is always in love danger."

"They have dreams and visions, too, father; they used to tell me about them. One said he had seen an angel, a warrior angel, standing amid black clouds on the top of Helvellyn. He stood quite still watching. Many things like that, I have been told. Ann believes in all the Bible angels, but she thinks they are shut up in heaven."

"Do you think so?"

"No, indeed! My angel is always with me, and Milton says:

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

"Then why do we ever take a wrong step?"

"Because we all want to take them. When we come to die, the feet of our angels will no doubt be torn and bleeding, with the rough roads over which they have followed us."

"I know nothing of such things, but this man seems to live in a higher world than I do."

"What is his name?"

"John Studley, D.D., or any letters you like. He owns them all, I think."

"Is John Studley a good name?"

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"He makes it so. I mean he ennobles it."

"Father, is he old?"

"As old as I am."

"You are not old. You could lead a rattling charge of cavalry today—no man better."

"I might do it again if this trouble in Africa ripens into war."

She did not notice the remark, but continued her catechism about their new neighbor, "Is he all through English, father?"

"No, he is half Scotch. His mother is an English Daleswoman—no better English than that."

"O father!"

"Good! We will put Yorkshire first!"

"Is he more Scotch than English?"

"No. The English mother rules. From her he gets all his sweet, homely nature and spiritual aptitudes, and also that kind of sixth sense by which he apprehends the invisible and sees the world as the prophets saw it."

"Then he gets his intellect from his father?"

"It is not the usual descent of mental power, but I think he does. He is very large physically, has great strength and endurance, and a big head full of cold, shrewd brains. He is well compounded, however the elements are mixed in John Studley."

"I shall go to see him in the morning."

"Do, my dear. And why not take up the study of

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French and Italian with him? He is clever in both languages."

"That might be interesting. Life, I fear, will be colorless and wearisome here."

"But at least tranquil."

"Yes—very tranquil! We might call it the Land of Forgetfulness."

She laughed a little at her own definition, but the Colonel heard, and felt the bitterness below the laugh, and the evening was too silent and personal to be pleasant. However tomorrow is always another day, and holds its own possibilities, and Lucia's "Good morning, father," was as cheerful as the song of the thrush singing at the open dining-room window. The Colonel compared them as he listened, and when Lucia turned to him he said:

"If you set your 'good mornings' to music, Lucia, they would explain your different moods very well indeed."

"But I do not want to explain my moods, father. I fear you would not often get any pleasure from them. Suppose we go and call on the new neighbor this morning. I am curious about him."

"Yes. Why not? He is at least another soul in this Land of Forgetfulness."

They found him standing at an open window of his study, watching the pigeons tossing themselves in their homeward flight. He came forward and gave

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Lucia his hand, and one steady piercing glance from the large gray eyes which illumined his face. Now Lucia was in a twilight frame of mind that morning. It was neither day nor night with her, but she saw in that one glance that deceit or making-believe was a thousand miles away from John Studley; and before the visit was over she liked him well enough to promise an hour's study every fine morning.

As she talked she looked around the room with some interest. It was a rather large room of a singular shape, and so spotlessly, painfully clean that its whiteness was disquieting. Involuntarily she asked herself what made it so almost offensively clean and so deliciously scented. Of course white paint and white lime cannot make a mystery of themselves, but the perfume! The etherial, entrancing perfume!

"From what flower of Paradise does it come, Mr. Studley?" Lucia asked eagerly.

"It is from the soul of the star-shaped *woodruff*. The seed must have been dropped by some angel, for angels rest where it grows. About midsummer I will show you how to find it. We must go to the cool, thick woods and look at the roots of great trees, where there is plenty of grass and shade and solitude. I think they keep their heavenly perfume until they really fall to dust. I have had some in my Bible for twenty years, and their soul is with them yet."

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"Their perfume seems to be all over the room—how is that?"

"When I meet with a good book it is my habit to put a woodruff-star in it, and as there are many good books scattered about the room, the perfume is all over."

At first Lucia did not appear to be so much impressed by Dr. John Studley as the Colonel had hoped she would, but as weeks went on she could not avoid falling under his usual, well-defined influence. In his company she was constantly charmed by his wide and curious knowledge, and so pleasantly instructed that she was talking French with him ere she could believe in her own ability to do so.

The advance also of summer brought much visiting—water parties, and fishing and hunting parties, balls and dinners, and races—all of which the Colonel enjoyed, but Lucia was very unhappy. And perhaps the hardest pinch of sorrow was the fact that her lover had not found means to write to her. She began to doubt her father and Ann and even the postmistress. She told herself that Arthur *had* written, and she lived to watch the coming of the mail and to consider whether Dixon would be buyable or not. She had an exquisite home, was tenderly loved, and her natural and social surroundings were all that youth and beauty could desire, and yet her life was just to fear and to hope, to doubt and then to begin hoping

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again, to have but one thought and turn that one thought a thousand ways.

She talked freely to Ann concerning her sorrow, and always of it as a cruel calamity which had risen out of her mother's grave to ruin her happiness, and when Ann reproved this idea she quietly reiterated it. "Why do the dead interfere with the living?" she continued. "No course of true love can run straight if the dead are to meddle. How can they understand? Neither people nor events stand still here."

"It would be good for the living if the dead interfered more frequently. It would that," answered Ann.

"It would not. The living, sooner or later, by hook or crook, would take their own way."

"That's likely, too. One said so who knew both kinds."

"O Ann! Ann! I am broken-hearted. My disappointment is more than I can bear."

"Dear, dear heart, you do suffer. I know you do. I tell the Colonel that, often—he is suffering, too."

"If I had only a letter—just a line or two."

"I know. There is something strange about that. I thought he would have written you as often as a letter could come. I do think he has gone to some foreign land."

"Without a word! O dear, dear, how can I bear it?"

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"Well, miss, when we have not what we love, then it is the right thing to love what we have."

"Don't talk nonsense, Ann. I hate proverbs."

"Does not Mrs. St. Clair tell you anything?"

"The St. Clairs are in America—perhaps he is with them—but they say they know nothing."

"You have other lovers—Rye of Ryebeck, Thorn of Thornycroft, and Sir James Lothian—all of them waiting their opportunity. I see well enough what they mean."

"I wish you would not name them. If I cannot marry Arthur, I will remain unmarried."

"Now I will tell you something you have not thought of. If you won't marry, your father will marry. Mind that!"

Lucia laughed, but there was a tone of fear in the laugh, and she was instantly anxious enough to ask:

"What makes you say a thing like that, Ann? And, pray, with whom is my father in love?"

"With that pretty girl, Lucy Pearson."

"Why, Ann, Lucy is only eighteen years old!"

"You are only nineteen, and the Colonel isn't very much older than Lord Fenwick."

"Ann! Ann Idle! My father is ages older than Lord Arthur."

"Doesn't look like it. Anyway, I heard that at the last water meeting, when the guests had a little dinner and a dance at the hotel after it, the Colonel

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danced three times with Miss Lucy, and took Parson Pearson and Mrs. Pearson and Miss Lucy home."

"I do not believe it."

"Dixon drove them in our best closed carriage—the parson being delicate."

"I wish I had gone to that meet, but I had a headache. When I am with father, there are no such carryings-on. I shall go with him for the future."

"I would if I was you. The Colonel is yet a very finely set-up man, and hardly a white hair on his head. The women run after him, I can tell you that—after him and Abbot's Rest, which is a bit of valuable property. Mind what Ann tells you—if you find it wearisome to be Colonel Ragnor's companion, there are several eligible ladies ready to take your place, Miss Lucia."

"Thank you, Ann."

"Change your tactics, dearie. You have no time to lose, for either Lucy Pearson, or Hannah Millom, or the widow Lorimer might be far worse as a living stepmother than the dear little lady who sleeps in Ulverston churchyard; if you think that she, being dead, divided you from Lord Fenwick, a living stepmother might divide you from your father and your fortune both. You know how it was with the Thorpe family, and the same way in the Singleton family, as well as in——"

"Say no more, Ann. I see all that you want me to

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see." Then they kissed each other tenderly, and Lucia went to her room to think out the problem Ann had set her. It was a perfectly natural one, she saw that at once; her father had a right to her companionship and sympathy, and she had left him very much alone. She had preferred to sit silent and motionless and think about her lover. Nothing about her father's affairs or amusements had interested her. Lord Fenwick's absence and silence and the probabilities arising out of these conditions entirely occupied her thoughts and her interest. But the consequences which Ann had pointed out were unthinkable. She must change that order of things at once.

The next morning she proposed a canter to Kenton. The Colonel was delighted and they went off as merry as two children, took their lunch at the Inn, walked about the old town and did shopping, called on the rector and had a cup of tea with him, and then sauntered home in the twilight. And as they sat down to their dainty little dinner, Lucia had the pleasure of hearing her father say, "I quite forgot Mrs. Lorimer's tea. I promised to be there about four o'clock. And I sent no note of apology."

"I do not suppose Mrs. Lorimer will miss you; certainly not if that bulky Squire Bell is there. Mrs. Lorimer and Squire Bell would make a weighty marriage—I mean in pounds avoirdupois."

The Colonel laughed and Lucia asked, "Are you

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not tired of teas? Such stupid affairs! All the women are too like men and the men are all too like women—even the fat squire at Mrs. Lorimer's feet, with his womanly cigarette and white rose in his buttonhole. Father, you are the only man round this part of England that stands erect, and looks like a Man. No wonder the women admire you!"

The Colonel involuntarily sat erect, and with an air of slight dissent said, "We have been their guests, Lucia; we must not speak ill of them. Let me tell you, dear, that you permit all the women to dress better than you do."

"Dear father, I will not commit that mistake again. Your daughter ought to dress worthy of her father's rank and honorable service. Where do we go tomorrow?"

"To Sir James Lothian's."

"To dinner?"

"Dinner and dance after dinner."

The evening was spent in talking, music, and a game of chess, and the Colonel was happy and Lucia at least far more satisfied than if she had sat silently musing with a book in her hand, her face shadowed by sorrowful fears and daily disappointment. She felt that in doing her duty to her father she had done it to herself, and into what good or kind deed does not self insinuate itself?

Never is it very far from a woman's inclination to

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dress handsomely. Besides, in Lucia's case she told herself that all her pretty wedding finery was going daily out of style and, though laid by in lavender and white linen, subject to constant loss of color and finish. Yes, she would wear all for her father's pleasure. Arthur would never return. After the insult he had received, she was foolish to expect it. Still she did not in her heart believe in this settlement of the question, and

> . . . no sooner did the old hope go to the ground,
> Then a new one straight to the selfsame mark,
> she shaped her.

It was simply impossible that a love so sweet, so strong and tender, should vanish in a few quarrelsome minutes and be seen no more.

To such thoughts she arrayed herself for the Lothian dinner in a pale-blue satin frock trimmed with silver lace. Her hair was fashionably dressed, her jewelry remarkable for so young a woman, and as soon as her attire was complete she assumed to perfection that air of fine breeding, that cold calmness and soft haze of impertinence which gave her "the air" of a woman of the world. Ann laughed, but yet was unconsciously influenced by it.

"My goodness!" she ejaculated. "Wherever did you learn such ways, miss?"

"At the London school. They teach such ways

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there. They are very necessary for women who have to meet all kinds of disagreeable people."

"But don't be ill-natured, miss. That wouldn't be like you."

"I'll try not to hurt anyone, Ann, but when you carry arms it is easy to use them."

However, Lucia was not ill-natured. She astonished and rather over-awed the women she had been used to ignore, and when she saw how proud and happy her father was in her success, she dressed constantly to his satisfaction. It seemed a poor recompense for the dreams and hopes of Love, but be the trouble what it may, the glorification of self is not a trifling antidote. The Colonel took the greatest delight and pleasure in his daughter's small social triumphs, and they made a light, interesting topic of conversation for the hours of household resting and waiting. And to the Colonel a victory of some kind was the fundamental thing in life; all else was mere commentary.

"Miss Ragnor's costumes are a combination of the fine arts," said Mrs. Lorimer, "but she is very sweet and kind in them. Nevertheless, ladies, anyone who aspires to Colonel Ragnor and Abbot's Rest will have to cross swords with two clever women. It is not worth while, or I would try it."

"Two women!" ejaculated Mrs. Pearson. "He has only one daughter—and a girl as handsome as

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Lucia Ragnor will marry without delay. There is no other woman."

"There is the woman who brought up Miss Ragnor—went to every school with her as maid and likewise if the young lady but visited a friend. They have never been parted until last winter."

"Then if Miss Ragnor marries, the woman called Ann will go with her to her new home," said Mrs. Pearson. "That is very certain. Colonel Ragnor will then be left alone. If there is anyone here who thinks she could cheer his loneliness, I warn her it is a task beyond her power. Colonel Ragnor is one of those men who believes the women of his household are superior to all other women in the world—there's plenty of such men—and I say that any woman ambitious to take her ease in Abbot's Rest must cut herself after the Ragnor pattern in everything, or have a restless time of it." All present declared they admired the Colonel and his charming daughter, but when the conversation about them was finished, there was very little left to admire. The tongue is not steel, but it cuts.

This life, however, satisfied neither the Colonel nor Lucia. It was seldom they came home after an evening's so-called amusement without feeling the emptiness of their lives and the poverty of their hands. And this vague dissatisfaction annoyed the Colonel. He attributed it entirely to Lucia's disas-

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trous love affair, and he said bluntly to her one night, "Lucia, you are wasting your life and happiness over a worthless lover. Bury your past forever."

"My past is in its grave, father, but its ghost haunts me. Wherever I am, Arthur's voice calls me all day long, and at night, when at last sleep comes, it is sleep full of dreams and misgivings that make me miserable before I awake to another aching day."

"You are very foolish."

"It seems to me, father, you were just as foolish about my mother."

He looked at her in astonishment. The presumption implied in this criticism of her father's love troubles seemed to him something too objectionable to be noticed. So he turned away with an air of offence, and left his dissatisfied daughter alone.

Thus the weeks went wearily on, but the experience that does not make us better, makes us worse; and Lucia was certainly becoming tired of "well-doing" both as regarded her home and her social duties.

One hot, still night the Colonel lay long awake pondering many things regarding his daughter, and finally came to the conclusion that nature in all the lovely moods she assumed around Abbot's Rest had no message of comfort for the love-sick girl. For indeed love is an intellectual malady, and asks for quite as much forbearance as a sick and suffering body; and he said finally to himself, "We will go to

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London in the fall, and if he should come there, sail for New York and Washington. I have military friends in both places; she must have more life, more change. I know after Vera's death there was nothing but the army for me."

In the midst of such reverie the mysterious travel of sleep and its visions came to him, and he had a clear consciousness that he and his dead wife had passed each other in the dark and exchanged a word or a thought in passing. And he was awed and thrilled, and tried in vain to understand the message. But it was a memory touched so solemnly with the intimacies of life that he could sleep no more that night, and when Lucia remarked his weary condition, he told her frankly the circumstance which had kept him awake.

And she answered with a sigh, "Poor mother! She wanted to say a word for me, no doubt. I think I could have understood her." Then she was silent, and the Colonel was not quite pleased at her remark. In a few moments he asked:

"Where are you going today? It is too hot to study."

"I shall take my microscope and textbook and go into the pine forest. Dr. Studley has made it a constant delight to me. You might choose a book and come with me."

"You see I have on my linen suit. I am going to

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my studio. I want to think over my dream. I suppose it was a dream?"

"Dear mother! A word we could understand would make all the difference. Why is it not given? I will go and sit among the high ferns by the Fairies' Well to eat my lunch; bring yours and eat it beside me, father. Then we will walk afterwards to the lakeside and have a sail."

"I might do that."

"Yes, father, do. It is not a brilliant program, but it is the best I can offer. By noon you will have thought about your dream all that is good for you. Thank you for telling it to me, father. It was a good dream. Mother is thinking of us." Then she slowly rose, walked to the piano and opened it. The Colonel waited, for though she played and sang very pleasantly, she was by no means addicted to casual playing. This morning she made no explanation of her purpose, nor did she touch her music file, but striking a few sweet, soft chords, her voice rose to them in a transport of anticipating affection:

"O looking from some heavenly hill!
Or from the shade of saintly palms!
Or silver reach of river calms!
Do thy large eyes behold us still?"

Her voice lingered and rose and fell, and the Colonel with eyes full of tears thanked her, with many loving

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words. "Where did you hear it? Where did you learn it?" he asked. "I never heard it before."

"Oh, but you did; only you were not listening. Lucy Pearson sang it at the funeral of our old pastor, and she gave me a copy."

"My dear, I will bring my lunch to the Fairies' Well by one o'clock."

"Thank you, father! I will wait for you."

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CHAPTER VIII

THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

LUCIA then went for her microscope and the novel she was reading, and Ann gave her a little green and white basket full of dainties. "You will get water from the Fairies' Well," she said, "and they do say the old monks blessed the well and made the water lucky to drink and better to bathe in. Your silver traveling cup is in the basket. Drink and drink all good fortune to yourself. But do take care of your frock. Something in gingham might have done for the pine wood. You will get that white muslin thing all wood-stained."

"What if I do? Ann will take all the wood-stain out again." Then she kissed Ann affectionately and went with a slow step through the garden and up the fells to the murmuring pine forest. She became happier as she stood in their green shadows, thrilled through with the songs and secrets of the nests they guarded. And there was a pleasant whispering wind above her, just fingering the tops of the trees. So in the sweet gloom and silence she said:

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"I will try and be happy in this happy place." But happiness comes not at our call. Perversely her mind would go back to the wonderful days in Glasgow, and to the dear lover who had turned every moment into a song, or tale of love and joy. She wished she could cry—cry from all her heart—and wash away the grief so silently hid there. An active, passionate grief, she thought she could endure; but sorrow that just crept like a mist over her life was a different thing—she longed rather for the pang of conflict.

No one must imagine that the suffering from disappointed love is a slight affair. To those who have really found the man or woman whom their soul loveth, separation or misunderstanding is a real and severe affliction. There is hardly any physical anguish to be compared with its fever, restlessness, and despair; and the mind that can bravely bear it, keeping the while a smiling face and doing a full service of household courtesy and help, is a great mind. In after-life there will be no need to doubt it under any circumstances; it will play up the game.

So Lucia seeing and feeling all the beauty of earth around her, took off her hat, and with book and glass began her studies. The jays and blackbirds went on with their noisy housekeeping, and the thrushes in every bush were telling her their family secrets, and amid so much peace and pleasure she partly forgot the yearning pain at her heart. In a little while the

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morning grew very warm, and she stood up and threw off her little silk jacket. Then finding it near noon, she looked over towards Abbot's Rest to see if there was any sign of her father's approach. She did not really expect him. He had too often and too freely expressed his preference for a tablecloth, a comfortable chair and Dixon behind it, to leave any doubt in her mind that he considered a lunch by the Fairies' Well a great act of self-denial not to be repeated too often at his age. Lucia understood this and was by no means disappointed when she saw nothing of her recreant guest.

She turned to the Fairies' Well again, her

> . . . wavy, windy hair afloat,
> And love songs whispering in her throat,

and lifting her basket spread a clean napkin on the grass at the foot of the high ferns. The dainties Ann had provided were soon laid upon it and she sat down to enjoy them, being well shaded and shielded by the great ferns behind her.

She was not quite alone. There was a robin redbreast asking her softly from his perch on the tallest fern, "Anything for me this morning?" and a little speckled-breasted thrush, waiting almost at her feet for the crumbs that he expected for his family's dinner, and the song of thanks he would sing before he touched what was given him was already keeping his

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beak apart and his wings all a-flutter. Lucia was quite familiar with the birds; they had shared her lunch too often to fear her. She fed them both first, and then drew her plate of cold grouse nearer.

"I will hush and bless myself in this green heaven," she said again to her restless heart, and she began to eat and to enjoy the good things before her. Every now and then she answered the thrush and the robin in little low snatches of song, but deeper down than she could fathom, she was conscious of a soft, eager voice calling, calling, "Come back, Arthur! Come back!"

About the middle of the meal she heard a distant voice—she heard her own name called. She sat still to listen. Again, and then again, she heard it. "Someone is calling me," she said in a little excitement, and she scanned carefully the hill behind the well, but there was no one visible.

"Then whoever wants me comes through the wood," she decided.

The quiet of the noon hour was all around, everything was still as an hour glass, and when once more "Lucia! Lucia!" rang down the wooded path, her heart beat wildly, her eyes dilated with rapture, and she said, "It is Arthur calling me! It is Arthur calling me!" and she stood up to listen quivering with hope and expectation.

In a few minutes Lord Fenwick passed out of the

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wood, and she saw him—in a few more moments they met in each other's arms. She brought him to her covert, and made him sit on the warm grass, and fed him with everything good she had. He was tragically white and thin, and looked like a man who had escaped death by the skin of his teeth. She would not notice these things. She looked into his eyes, heard him speak, clasped his hand, and at that hour it was sufficient. Indeed the visible presence of each other was for a short time all they needed.

Her smiles and little sighs and tender attentions filled him with a joy that brought tears to his eyes, and her beauty thrilled and amazed him. For in her great delight as she moved about the sweet, green place, she seemed to have the bloom of flowers and all their softness and sweetness. If she spoke, her voice had a caress in it, and her very name went to his head like wine. That sacred fear which fell upon *Lancelot,* when he saw the maiden standing in the dewy light, fell upon Arthur Fenwick. He had not dreamed she was so beautiful.

"O thou most sweet!" he said, drawing her to his side. "Let me tell you now why I could not come to you before. I fell sick as soon as I reached Fenwick Hall, and I have lain in the Valley of the Shadow of Death almost ever since. Much of the time I have been insensible and until a month ago I was unable to move. During the past three weeks I

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have been preparing for this visit, and I have brought with me such proofs of my innocence of all the evil your father lays to my charge as will compel him to restore to me his faith and friendship."

"Today dear, we will not talk of sorrowful things. Only tell me that you love me. There is nothing else I care to hear," and there was much room in her beautiful pure eyes, such a glow of soft dark fire, that they held him by a charm which revealed itself constantly, in the low delicious stumbling patois of love. Never man wooed with a nobler spirit, never maid spoke so like a songbird. Oh, the vital mystery, and ever-working miracle of Love! That day the Fairies' Well was a drama of sun and scent of Love and Hope—a real Paradise to the two sitting alone in its charmful atmosphere, unknowing and uncaring about the flight of hours, until the red sun setting behind them showed that the blessed day was over and a return to the homes of men necessary, and that without delay.

In the meantime the Colonel was not as ignorant of what had taken place as the lovers imagined. He had easily and early put out of his intentions a lunch at the Fairies' Well, and at the proper hour had eaten a comfortable meal of hare soup and rook pie with Dixon waiting on him with pleasant advices concerning the dishes on the table. "The lettuce, sir, is fresh and crisp—and the mushrooms, I got

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them in the lower meadow, sir. I thought you would be glad to see them."

"You are right, Dixon, I am. In about half an hour bring my light fatigue jacket, and my cane. I am going to the pine forest."

He followed this intention promptly, smoking a fine cigar as he did so, and wondering idly whatever made him promise to go to the forest, and then to the lake, when he was sure the glass was climbing up to seventy-five degrees. "I must be a very good-natured man," he decided. For a moment he smiled, but grew suddenly grave, for the dream of his dead wife and the sweet singing of the stray verse reminded him of the reasons for his ready acceptance of his daughter's invitation.

He was then only about two hundred feet from the Fairies' Well, which lay at the bottom of the ascent he had just climbed. Before taking the decline, he went to a certain spot from which he was accustomed to look for Lucia, and if she was present, she always answered his view halloo with cheerful promptitude.

On the moss-covered rocks he saw her sitting, and as he looked she stood up, and he waited a moment to see her slim loveliness raise itself straight and white among the tall, waving ferns. The next moment his hand was at his mouth and he was on the point of calling, when a gentleman, who must have

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been lying on the grass at her feet, rose quickly and stood at her side.

The Colonel's hand fell like a stone and he gazed at the couple standing below him. They leaned lovingly towards each other. He heard the ripple of a laugh, and then they sat down together on the short warm grass. And Lucia's hand was in the man's hand, and he kissed it—often. Of course it was Fenwick. It must be Fenwick—only he looked so much slighter, and lighter in bulk. Yet it was not any of her lovers in the neighborhood, and he stood still wishing that the man—whoever he was—would rise once more, and remove his hat. The wish was hardly made ere it was granted, and then he could no longer doubt it was Arthur Fenwick.

His first feeling was one of rage and wounded affection. Lucia was deceiving him. He could not believe such a thing. It was incredible. This point must be determined first of all. If she was, he felt as if nothing else mattered. He turned back sharply, and arrived at Abbot's Rest in a highly excited state. "It is the heat, Dixon," he said. "I ought not to have walked in it. I will go to my room, and lie down awhile."

After all, he could not move in the matter until he saw Lucia. If she said nothing about her visitor, then she was deceiving him; and a false child he

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would not own. She could go with her lover. He would not put out a finger to stop her. He would trouble his heart no more about the ungrateful girl. He was angry also with Dr. Studley. He felt sure that in some way or other he had brought about this meeting of the lovers; well then, Lucia must have made a confidant of Studley, and no doubt all three had said what they thought of his behavior. He could not keep this bit of self out of the circumstance nor avoid a wonder as to what had been said. He remembered that his friend St. Clair had not approved his opinion of Fenwick, and upon the whole his personal as well as his fatherly feelings were wounded and irritated.

His thoughts completely overcame him and he felt as he had never done before the bewildering human mysteries and anxieties of life. He walked to and fro in his room rapidly, angrily, and finally in a kind of passionate exhaustion stood still, and throwing upward his arms, uttered a pitiful, ejaculatory prayer for God's mercy and help to guide him. Probably never before had he felt more acutely his need of God than he did on this drowsy, undevout hour of the hot afternoon.

When he had dressed for dinner, it was much cooler and he went into the garden. He took the path usually taken by Lucia, for he wished to meet her before she had any opportunity to make inquiries

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of Ann to Dixon. There was a wise king who said:

"I was never out of it yet, when I judged men as they judged women."

Yet Colonel Ragnor was judging his daughter at that hour in a manner that would have provoked his highest indignation had the same rules been applied to himself.

It was late and gray when Lucia returned. The Colonel met her near the large entrance gates and for a moment was charmed and astonished at her beauty. Never, even in the most brilliant festivals, had he seen her so radiant, so charming, so full of joy. Love had transfigured her. It had also made her brave, for in the moment she saw her father, she resolved to tell him everything. So she called him cheerfully, and he waited for her.

"You did not come to the Fairies' Well, father, did you?" she asked.

"Did you really expect me, Lucia?" he answered. "It was an unusually warm day. I do not suppose you missed me."

"Yes, and no, father. Dear father, stand here a moment, we will not go a step farther, until I tell you something—Arthur was with me."

"You mean Fenwick? Impossible!"

"I mean Arthur, Lord Fenwick, who loves me. Father, he has been in the Valley of the Shadow of

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Death for more than three months, and he comes back from the very grave, to ask you to be his friend once more."

"He was very foolish."

"Father, you must listen to him. He has now the evidence to prove he never wronged you. You do not want to wrong any man."

"I am just to everyone."

"But Arthur is more particular than everyone else."

"I know not."

"Oh, yes you do. His mother was your mother's sister. You were rivals in love and you won the woman you both loved."

"Well——"

"Be not only just, be generous, for my sake—for my mother's sake."

"Your mother disliked him."

"She likes him now, she is sorry for us, she spoke to you last night and——"

"Let us go forward, it is too damp to stand, and Ann does not like dinner delayed."

"Ann! Who is Ann? How scandalously terrified some men are of their servants! You are master here. Have dinner when it pleases you—what I am saying is of more consequence than——"

"Now, Lucia, keep your temper."

"—Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding—there!"

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"I am thinking of your health."

"Father, I am begging my life."

"Nonsense! Where is the man staying?"

"I don't know whom you mean."

"I mean Fenwick."

"He is with Dr. Studley."

"How is that?"

"The late Lord Fenwick was Dr. Studley's patron. It was in Fenwick Library he worked for sixteen years. Studley came to the old Dower House without knowing *who* it was that owned Abbot's Rest."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"On my word, you may take it! It's the truth!"

"And so Dr. Studley is the confidant?"

"You are wrong, sir. Arthur had been with Dr. Studley nearly two days before I was named—all last Sunday and Monday. You remember that it stormed both days, and I sat most of the time breaking my heart for Arthur, and Arthur only a mile away. If I had only known!"

The Colonel made no answer. They were at the Rest, and Dixon standing at the open door. "We are about half an hour late," said Lucia, "go to your dinner, father. I will be with you presently."

"I shall wait until you are ready."

"Thank you! I will not detain you more than ten minutes." And in very little more than ten minutes, she took her place at the head of the table, in

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a fresh, white muslin frock, and radiating smiles full of love and hope. There was a red rose in her loosened hair, and a red rose at her belt, and her father looked at her with wonder and delight. How did Lucia do it? It took him generally a long hour to make a toilet; how had Lucia done it in ten or twelve minutes?

The next morning they walked together to the Studley house. Everything was dewy and fresh, and they stood a moment or two by a little plantation of cedars, and in its dull stillness listened to the long murmur among them.

"The pines have nobler tones," said Lucia.

"But the resinous odor of the cedars is sweeter than a rose garden," answered the Colonel. "I used to have happy hours in a cedar grove, and to inhale the odor of cedars is yet like inhaling—like inhaling——"

"The fragrance of your lost youth, father."

"Yes, dear, just so, the fragrance of my lost youth. There is Studley in his garden. Lucia, I lost my temper I fear at St. Clair's; there must be nothing of the kind this morning. You have influence over Lord Fenwick. I think I can take care of myself."

Studley had been among his dahlias propping up their splendidly colored and exquisitely pleated blooms. He was quiet and a little troubled, and he

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led them into a large, lofty room that was magnificently furnished, though all its appointments were certainly a century old. It had an air of dignity, almost of solemnity, quite different from the cheery study with its books and flowers and "specimens" of all kinds and its heavenly perfume of woodruff. But Lucia divined the moment she entered the apartment, the Doctor's motive, in making it the scene of the conference that was to be held in it. "Men must be much excited," she thought, "very rough or vulgar who would feel themselves able to transgress against its atmosphere of serene and lofty propriety. And I dare say Studley wishes to give an air of some importance to the settlement of a feud of twenty years' standing. It would make the idea of its renewal much harder to entertain."

The room was empty when they entered it, but there was a locked portfolio on the table, and Studley placed chairs for the Colonel and himself near it. Then the door was softly opened by Fenwick's valet, and Fenwick entered. Lucia rose to meet him, the Colonel turned rapidly and then stood amazed and speechless. The pallor of the Valley of the Shadow was still over Fenwick's countenance, his figure was much slighter and his whole appearance was that of a man who had barely escaped the grave. For a moment he stood irresolute, then he advanced slightly and said:

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"I am sorry to see that you have been so ill, Fenwick."

"Yes, I have suffered—very much."

"My friends," said Dr. Studley. "There was a great blunder made twenty years ago, followed, of course, by its great penalty. We are together this morning to prove it a blunder in its entirety, and to forbid it any further influence over the lives it has scarred and shadowed. I am going to show you that in the whole tragedy of the Spencer family, my friend Lord Fenwick had no part whatever for which he deserves blame or reproach."

"I shall gladly be convinced of his innocence," said the Colonel, and Fenwick smiled faintly, and lifted Lucia's hand.

"Lord Fenwick has been held responsible by those ignorant of the facts for the moral and financial failure of Hal Spencer. Here are fourteen I. O. U.'s, aggregating eleven hundred pounds, and representing that amount loaned by Lord Fenwick to Mr. Hal Spencer, not one of them bearing a penny's worth of interest."

"Why no interest?" asked the Colonel.

"I do not put my friends to usury, Colonel."

"Here also are three letters Mr. Spencer, Senior, sent to Lord Fenwick. From these letters it is evident that Lord Fenwick had been discussing with Hal's father plans for his son's reformation, and one

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plan proposed by Lord Fenwick was, that Hal should go to Canada, and re-commence his life and his profession in one of its large cities, Lord Fenwick agreeing to loan him five hundred pounds for his outfit. It is but bare justice to Lord Fenwick, for Colonel Ragnor to examine these papers"—and he gently pushed them towards him.

While the Colonel was thus employed, Dr. Studley walked round the room with Lucia, and showed her the tapestries and porcelains, and opened a little inlaid cabinet, full of lovely trifles of all kinds.

"They belong," he said, "to the Dowager Lady Fenwick. I am only their curator."

Then the Colonel laid down the papers he had been examining, and Dr. Studley lifted them and with a questioning look at Fenwick laid them in the grate. With a slow precision he set fire to them and then sat down. They were blazing and burning when Studley resumed his narrative.

"So we have this hour taken a great wrong out of the lives of three people, burned and buried it forever. Is this true, Colonel Ragnor?"

"Absolutely," answered the Colonel. "Lord Fenwick is fully exonerated. He deserves praise for his forbearance and generosity, rather than blame, as far as I can judge."

"The case of Mr. Spencer, Senior," Dr. Studley continued, "was a most natural sequence to the ruin

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and death of his son; and the servant who accidentally killed the foolish young man was acquitted by an empaneled jury. Lord Fenwick had no more to do with this tragedy than had I or Colonel Ragnor himself."

"I agree with you. We need not discuss the subject," replied Colonel Ragnor.

"The last count against Lord Fenwick is the writing and publication of an exceedingly heartless, slanderous, and untruthful account of this double tragedy in the *Maryport Journal*, making it appear that it was the natural result of Mrs. Ragnor's marriage with Colonel Ragnor. Had Lord Fenwick done this shameful thing, John Studley would not say one word in his favor. But Fenwick had nothing to do with it. He was not in England at the time it was published. He was shooting in Canada, and staying with the Governor-General. The article was published, as you may all see, on March sixteenth. Here is a letter written by Lord Fenwick to his mother dated New York, March ninth. Here are other letters written to various persons from Canada and bearing Canadian postmarks; and they cover all of February, March and April."

Then there was a pause while the Colonel examined the letters, which he did very carefully. The rest of the party were quiet and silent. The intense feelings evoked in the discussion of a subject so per-

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sonal and momentous to all had changed the air of the room. It was now full of an electric tension that everyone felt, though it affected Fenwick the most deeply. He could not sit still. His face had flushed. He was livid with emotion. It took all Lucia's silent influence to prevent him from interrupting the Colonel's careful, slow reading and suspicious examination. It implied a doubt, which he could not endure, and he said sharply:

"Doctor, call Dick."

Until Dick's arrival, Lucia paced the long room with her lover, whispering words of affection and patience. But she was also wise in her womanly way, and she said:

"Arthur, father is right, in wanting to be quite sure. A lingering half-suspicion is dreadful—something that torments, and you dare not speak about it."

"Good heavens, Lucia! Do you know that he is suspecting me of writing a blackguard, defaming letter that is not even written and spelt as a gentleman writes and spells."

"Father is a suspicious man; he had to be in the army. He was always watching, watching."

"A most unpleasant habit, most——"

Here Dick entered quite at ease. He looked at his master who never noticed him. Before he dared to speak, Dr. Studley asked:

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"Do you know this piece of newspaper, Dick?"

"Yes, sir! I told you so last night."

"Now you are telling Miss Ragnor, Lord Fenwick, and Colonel Ragnor that you know it. How do you know it?"

"I concocted it myself."

"Did you write it?"

"Couldn't write it—got Tommy Evers to write it for me."

"Why?"

"Because we was old chums and because he could write and had a job in setting up type on a paper. I gave him two pounds for writing it, and then I took it to the man who can put things in a paper, and I gave him two pounds. He acted as if he was not sure he ought to believe me, but I showed him two letters from my lord, which I happened to have in my pocket."

"You rascal! How dared you show my letters?"

"Did these letters say anything of Mrs. Ragnor's death?" continued the Doctor.

"My lord did not know she was dead. He was in America when she died. The letters told me to take rooms for him at the North British Hotel and meet the steamer with his own carriage."

"Who took this paper to Mrs. Ragnor?"

"I took it to the house myself."

"How did you know where Mrs. Ragnor lived?"

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"My wife lived with her. It was my business to know where my wife lived."

"Did you see your wife?"

"Not at that time. I didn't want to see her. I had told her a bit of my mind the day before. She thought I had left Ulverston. I just watched until I saw her go into the garden with a big white bowl in her hand to gather blackberries. Then I passed it in by the second girl."

"That is sufficient," said Colonel Ragnor. "Send the man away." And when he left the room the Colonel rose to his feet and continued:

"One of the trivial things connected with my wife's death is that bowl of blackberries. Someone in a hurry had thrown it over, and the ripe berries had stained the white damask cloth, as if with splotches of blood. It annoyed, and even frightened me. I said, 'It is a bad sign,' and as I walked that dreary, lonely place all night long, it affected me more and more. Gentlemen, remember Death was fighting for my wife's life in the next room, and the cries of the cruel struggle filled my ears and nearly broke my heart. I have never touched a blackberry since. I forbid my gardener to have a single blackberry vine on the place; it is a rather humiliating thing to confess the influence of this vulgar superstition over me, but truth is truth, and Fenwick's valet has told the truth. I know it. I need no fur-

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ther proof of the folly which led me to nurse for twenty years supposed wrongs into positive hatred. But the thing is done. I believed I was right. I regret the irrevocable with all my soul."

After a moment's delay, Fenwick said clearly but very softly, "Let those twenty bad years be forgotten. There is joy and peace in the years to come"; and he looked with passionate affection into the face of Lucia beaming love and hope upon him.

Dr. Studley was not quite satisfied. The men had approached each other too carefully. He wanted to see real affection break down the barriers of personal feeling, and also he perceived that Lucia did not consider the reconciliation complete. She looked at him and he answered the look by lifting a book and as if reciting from it, thrilled the room and the hearts of all present with the following words:

> "The human soul that crieth at thy gates,
> Of man or woman, alien or akin,
> *Is thine own soul that for admission waits,*
> *Rise, let it in!"*

Fenwick and Lucia rose to their feet spontaneously, and Fenwick stretched out his hand and cried, "I am sorry with all my soul, Robert!"

"So am I, Arthur!"

"Forgive me for Lucia's sake."

"Forgive me, Arthur!"

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Then Lucia clasped their hands between her own and kissed them both, and the Colonel drew Lucia within his right arm and said:

"I shall make a little festival over this event. Will you both join us at dinner at seven o'clock to-night?"

Fenwick did not seem to hear the invitation; he looked passionately into the Colonel's eyes and said in a low, intense voice:

"Robert, this is a question for eternity. Will you now give me your daughter for my wife? For God's sake answer me." His heart throbbed in his words, the very air tingled in which they stood, and the Colonel lived for a moment or two at the very height of his being. Then he laid Lucia's hand in her lover's, and she kissed them both, as the Colonel, drawing her to his side, said, "My dear! My dear! May God bless you both!"

He was trembling and exhausted with the suppression of feeling, and he hurried Lucia away, after a solemn agreement that not one of the party should ever allude to the subject again; and as a kind of seal to the compact Fenwick took all the letters and papers concerning it, and laid them on the ashes of the first, pitiful records of Hal's folly and destruction.

Then the subject was dead, and all felt that silence was now far more decorous than discussion. Lucia,

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with womanly tact and generosity, had not named her own hopes and plans, and that night also they were quite ignored. There was a delicious dinner prepared, and the pretty room was decked with poppies and dahlias and autumn flowers, and they talked a little of the coming season and of a trip to the south of France and a great deal of military affairs, about which both men were enthusiasts, and as the night deepened, Lucia sang a little, and in the heavenly light and grace of forgiveness everyone was happy. A pleasant glow suffused the house and whether they talked of science or the army, of society or books, their talk was like singing—it was so full of those glad, melodious tones that only children and birds and lovers know how to use.

At ten o'clock the guests went home in the Colonel's closed carriage, and Lucia went back to the parlor and talked of Dr. Studley and their plans for the next day. She stood before the hearth, holding thus early in the autumn a few blazing logs, and one of her small feet in its pretty sandaled slipper was on the low brass fender, and she slightly lifted the robe of violet gauze in which she looked so enchantingly lovely and happy that her father had a sharp pang of jealous unsatisfied affection and disappointment. He wondered at her love for Lord Fenwick. He felt as if he could have resigned her more easily to some youth nearer her own age. He told himself

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bitterly that the title was a poor payment for every other advantage.

Lucia saw and felt the change and she went away before it began to explain itself in words, but a cloud stole over her heart, and she walked slowly upstairs as if suddenly tired. But she was really weary, and she threw off her pretty garments hastily, smiling a little to herself as she untied the pretty sandaled slippers, and admired the smallness of her feet which Fenwick had so often admired. She had intended to send for Ann and have a long confidential talk with her, but she was too weary and sleepy and she slipped in between the white sheets, and laid her head on the soft pillow and in the delicious relaxation of blissful lassitude fell fast asleep. However deep as her sleep was, it left

> . . . a door on hinge,
> Whence the soul, ere the flesh suspected,
> Was off and away.

The sweet strength of the stars, the magic of the moon, the noble repose of the night, were all hers; and she was weary with love and joy, so she surely ought to have "slept sweetly as a babe who yet remembers heaven," but she did not. Her soul called her from dark and lonely places, and she was troubled with the somber terrors which are only too ready to pursue us in the shadow of the night hours.

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The Colonel sat for half an hour nearly motionless. Doubts invaded his mind. Fears troubled his heart, and he wondered if he had been as hastily foolish in forgiving, as he had once been in blaming. Suddenly he rang the bell, and asked for Mrs. Idle, if she had not retired.

In a few minutes Ann stood within the door, but there was no smile on her face nor any shadow of sympathy in her perfectly correct inquiry, "What is it you wish, sir?"

"Come in, Ann. Shut the door and sit down. I wish to tell you something very important."

"Yes, sir! The malt is boiling, sir, and near ready for the hops. Dixon is not to trust—as you know."

"Never mind the brewing. You were the only soul with me in the great sorrow that smote me twenty years ago."

"Mrs. Ragnor died in my arms, Colonel."

"You have cared for her child ever since."

"I took it from her arms. Yes, sir, I have cared ever since, God knows!"

"You have always done your duty to her and to me. Ann, you are going to have some difficult days now—so am I, God help me."

"You will find me to be depended on, sir. What you desire, Ann will see to herself."

"The house is likely to be much disturbed for the next three or four months."

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"Well, sir, nothing suits me so much as to see you and Miss Ragnor suited. It will take a deal to disturb a house Ann Idle has to manage, but to be plain with you, sir, if there is to be much company, two more women servants and one man servant will be needed."

"There will be company on and off, Ann, and going and coming, and you must hire what extra help is required. You can judge when I tell you that Miss Ragnor will be married to Lord Fenwick about the New Year."

"It is hard to believe that, sir—very hard indeed! I am taken all aback—you must excuse me, sir. I'll just go to myself."

"No, Ann, you must sit down and listen to what I say. Lord Fenwick has given me the most positive proof that he had nothing whatever to do with the troubles of the Spencer family."

Then Ann answered with some temper, "Sir! I am not forced to believe what Lord Fenwick says! As for you, sir, you can please yourself what you do. There was my poor mistress—she died in my arms! I know what she believed."

"Lord Fenwick was in America at the time of my wife's death. He had been in America for some months before it; he was there long after she died. It was quite impossible for him to have been in any way cognizant of that tragedy."

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"Them as was in his confidence could keep watch for him. He is used to giving orders, and leaving others to do his dirty work."

"Ann, get rid of such thoughts and never again voice them in my presence. Never again, Ann! Remember that! I have forgiven my cousin the financial wrongs he has done to me. We have clasped hands over our reconciliation. My only child loves the man and will marry him or no other. What can I do? Oh, what can I do, but submit? It must be the will of God."

"That I will not believe, sir. If I did, I would throw my Book of Common Prayer and my Church Catechism out of the window."

"Ann, I have accepted the situation. I saw no other way. Now Lucia will depend on you or go to strangers. Ann, you must do all you think her mother would do under these circumstances. She will expect you to keep your promise to her most especially at this time."

"I will keep my promise to its last letter, sir. But it is beyond wit to teach wisdom to a maid in love—though what she sees to love in the man confounds me. He looks as old as you do, sir, and to my thinking you are a far handsomer man than Lord Fenwick."

"Now, Ann, you are stretching the truth beyond all likelihood. Everyone acknowledges the great

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beauty and grace of Lord Fenwick. I was always his inferior in manly beauty, though not, thank God, in manly strength and vigor!" and the Colonel threw his broad shoulders backward, and lifted his head to a military standard. Nor was he quite insensible to Ann's estimate of his physical advantages. He remembered that beautiful women had admired him, and that his wife had always declared him to be the handsomest man in his regiment.

"Now, Ann!" he added, "I rely on you to help me over these few hard months, by making all as pleasant as you can. We cannot prevent the marriage, and we must make the best of it. You can do so much to bring good out of evil, I am going to trust in you, Ann."

"Well, sir, when we can't hinder, it is often the best thing to help."

"Just remember, that he has explained everything to me, and that I am satisfied."

"Yes, sir, and it will be well for him to remember that he has got God Almighty to square with yet. Good night, sir! I hope you may sleep well."

"But I know he won't sleep one hour," she muttered to herself, "and he don't deserve to—considering——"

The Colonel, sighing, rose as she left the room, put out the lights, threw the burning logs backward into the deep chimney, and then sauntered slowly to

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his bedroom. He was miles and miles away from sleep; he was as wakeful as if he was on patrol duty. He tried to remember his past life. It was all over, and could not threaten him with griefs strange and unexpected. He had met and conquered the past, so he tried to keep his thoughts on it, but could not. These dead days and dead feelings had lost all their power over him. They just drifted past his memory, like dead leaves on the backwaters of a forgotten life.

But the present was vitally, forcibly, persistently with him, and the little doubt cast by Ann as to Lord Fenwick's knowledge and directions would not lie still. It kept asking, what if Ann should be right? What if he had planned the outrage and left it to Dick to carry out? Had he been fooled again? He had relied on Studley—was Studley any wiser than himself? With questions like these haunting his consciousness, how could he sleep? And what kind of sleep could he expect with such dreams sitting on his pillow?

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CHAPTER IX

LOVE AND DEATH

Love and Death,
  Veiled Figures hand in hand
Move o'er men's heads; dread, irresistible,
  To open the portals of that other Land
Where the great voices sound and visions dwell.

LIVING in the house with lovers who are preparing for their marriage is far from a restful or pleasant experience, but so many of my readers have doubtless suffered from its wearisome selfishness that it is unnecessary to enter into the events of the next four months in particular detail. Abbot's Rest was anything but restful, for its life was now ordered according to the demands of two lives exigent and uncertain, who had their own very special desires and wants and who seemed in a great measure to have forgotten there were any other desires and wants in the whole world.

Lucia at least took her tale of love under the trees and the moon and the stars as something quite new

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and peculiar to herself. In sunshine that went to the heart of man and the root of every green thing, 'mid the fragrance of late roses and lilies, through autumn's melancholy odor of decay when the far receding hills had a light like dreamland lying over them and the whole landscape was full of meek loneliness and pastoral dejection, Lucia's lover

> . . . looked at her as a lover can,
> She looked at him as one who awakes,
> Her past was asleep, and her life began.

Startide and the cheerful flame from the hearthstone brought fresh rapture and that sweet patois of love which happiness uses so well.

"Oh Lucia, my love! Listen, dear heart of mine! You are the honey, the milk, the sweet strong wine of my world! Oh, how I love you!"

"And how I love you! You know my heart, Arthur, and from you I shall never hide it."

Thus they talked as the bliss so long afar at length drew nigh; and for some weeks this lazy, selfish adoration of love went on, only broken by Fenwick's short visits to London or Fenwick Castle on business. Finally, however, the marriage was fixed for the second day of the coming new year; and then the preparations that had been lazily progressing, became urgent and rather hurried in their necessities.

It was almost a relief to the Colonel and his house-

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hold, when this monotony of love-making was broken by costumers from London, jewelers, decorators, and people who had some real business in life and who had to be attended to. Lord Fenwick felt himself also compelled to return to his home and attend to the changes which in more than one direction must follow his marriage. His mother's duty was to retire to her Northumberland dower house, but Fenwick admitted she was adverse to doing so. She wished to remain in Fenwick Castle; she pleaded her long residence in it, and the great labor and personal expense she had been put to in the complete restoration and renovation of its ancient rooms. And with Lord Fenwick his mother's opinions and claims were beyond all dispute. If anyone was inviolably and perpetually right in this world, it was Lady Henrietta, wife of the late Lord John Jerome Alexander Fenwick. It would have seemed a kind of impiety to Lord Arthur Fenwick to doubt or dispute any command or even desire of his mother's.

This parental servitude had become very evident to Lucia, and she was not at all sympathetic with it. And Lord Fenwick had noticed her indifference to all his favorite anecdotes and descriptions of the Lady Henrietta and resolved that after his marriage this want of reasonable appreciation must be at once corrected. Lucia would not consider the question; she simply put it out of her consciousness. The

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trouble, if it was one, was not to be met for some months. Her marriage and honeymoon were to come first. With these thoughts the contingent of a mother-in-law was a far-off consideration. Her love absorbed all her feelings and filled her heart and her imagination as completely as crimson fills a rose.

During the month of November, Fenwick was three weeks absent from Abbot's Rest. It was, he claimed, an absence most unwelcome and unavoidable. The finishing up of business of great importance, the buying of much new furniture, and his own necessary visits to his London tailor were excuses sufficient; especially as they were in some respects duplicated by similar wants on the bride's part. For though the preparations of Lucia's wedding garments had been going on for nearly three months, the great miracle of the marriage vestment was yet to be considered—the sumptuous wedding-robe of white satin and silver gauze—and she resolved during this interval of wooing to have the London costumer a couple of days at Abbot's Rest, and give her whole time and attention to the creation of this bridal necessity.

Fortunately, the Colonel was going to Lord Lothian's to join the Westmoreland Hunt for a week, and Lucia's plan was carried out without let or hindrance. On the third morning after the Colonel's departure the white wonder of satin and silver was fitted and pleated and trained to perfec-

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tion, and the whole household having paid it a visit of adoring admiration, it was carefully laid away until the happy morning when Lucia would startle her wedding guests with its unexpected loveliness.

Then Ann gave a great sigh and sat down heavily in an adjacent chair. "Miss Lucia, my dearie," she said wearily, "I am going to give every servant on the place a bit of holiday. They are all wornout with running after two men, and I'll tell them there is no hurry push for three days, and they may take their time about what there is to do and put a sleep in between whiles if they can manage it."

"Are they so tired as all that, Ann?"

"You forget, dearie, that the Colonel is up before dawning, and the lord awake long after midnight. The fires are never out, the lights are aye burning, and someone is on the watch all the time, while Ann has to look after everything and everyone. So Ann herself is a bit tired—that stands to reason."

"Then I'll kiss you and love you, Ann, and that will make you well. I am afraid I have not loved you enough latey."

"No, you have not, that is the very truth."

"Arthur was so hard to satisfy. He wanted to be loved and petted all the time."

"Man-like. They never forget their mother's baby talk. Some woman has to cut and clip her words for them all their lives long."

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"Ann, now that you have seen Arthur day after day, don't you like him better?"

"Not a bit better."

"He has such fine taste. He will be charmed with my wedding-dress."

"Fine taste is not a moral quality, miss. Anybody that had eyes in their head would admire the dress."

"But you like him a little better, Ann?"

"I thought the thing over last night, miss, and I'm sure I do not like him any better."

"He is my heart's choice, Ann."

"Such as it is, and we won't go into the ethics of the subject now."

"Well, you will have to live with him, Ann, for you and I cannot be separated. Arthur has a way of his own—but——"

"What Arthur has not a way of his own?"

"But he is easily managed."

"I have seen you fail to manage him on not a few occasions."

"O Ann!"

"Yes, I have."

"Perhaps I gave in of my own accord."

"That was just what you did. If men were all made alike, miss, there might be fixed rules for their management, but"—and Ann shrugged her shoulders, and laughed softly as she remembered the con-

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tradictions and contrariness and endless variety of the provoking masculine element.

"You will find any man a handfull, and a heartfull, miss," she continued. "Men are out of sorts at all times and seasons, and it is seldom they'll tell you the reason why. But sooner or later all married lives must come to the same system, if they are to be borne at all—you will have to give and to take and to bear and forbear—just like any other poor married woman. Now I will go and give the women and men a little relief, and I think I shall take a nap myself this afternoon."

"Ann, wait a few minutes. You have run away from me lately whenever I wanted to talk to you."

"Well then, dearie, what do you want to say to Ann?"

"Ann, I want you to like Arthur for my sake. He is quite a changed man lately—since he loved me. Dr. Studley says so."

Then Ann laughed scornfully, and her face flushed, and her gray eyes flashed angrily. "I would not give a broken bone button for John Studley's opinion," she answered. "Who is John Studley? His father was a ploughman to Farmer Brent. How can a man like John Studley, a peasant born, judge a real lord?"

"You must not talk in that way, Ann. Dr. Studley

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is a gentleman. He has won the right to the title—father says so."

"Title! Yes, maybe, but he can't look like Lord Fenwick nor carry himself like Lord Fenwick nor talk like Lord Fenwick. None of us like John Studley. He puts on airs and is so beyond reason clever and good. O, miss, I don't believe he is a bit better man than Lord Fenwick. When I was first out at service, I heard my master often say a verse, that just suited such good men as John Studley. Maybe you would like to hear it?"

"Perhaps I would. Tell me it."

Then Ann said with inimitable emphasis:

> "Thus spoke the crab unto the snake,
> As in his claw he trussed him,
> 'Walk straight like me, you wriggling rake!
> I hate that sideway custom.' "

"The master said some old Greek wrote it, so there must have been men like John Studley long, long ago. You know he has never got married. Women see through him."

Lucia laughed and kissed her old friend and Ann was very happy and told her to come down at twelve instead of one, and she would find a nice little lunch ready. "We had breakfast an hour earlier than was right and proper," she added, "and when you have eat a bit, lie down and dream an hour away.

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The house is sleepy and lonely without men folk. I wish the Colonel would bide at home more. I suppose he is looking for someone to whisper baby talk to him."

"He is not doing anything of the kind, Ann. He told me that he had neither wish nor will to marry, and father has an iron will; no one could make him marry against it."

"I don't care what kind of a will the Colonel has. Women never go for a man's will—they know better—they throw spells over their judgment, poor fellows!"

"Spells! What nonsense, Ann!"

"If a woman has eyes worth anything, she can throw spells. You, yourself with a glance could bewitch any man. Do you think Lord Fenwick consults his judgment or his reason when he makes himself a fool over your beauty, and says you are 'the pearl and flower of all womanhood?' You have thrown a spell over him. You have not spoken to him. Your eyes have done the business—a look down and a look up, and what then had reason or judgment to say? Tell me that."

"I wish you would hurry up lunch, Ann. I am really hungry. Let us talk about some cold roast beef and roasted apples and cream and a kiss from Ann to make up for all my late neglect." And Lucia looked so loving and delightful as she stretched out

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her arms that it was easy for Ann to take the kiss in full payment for all the small slights she had been blaming Lucia for.

Thus the days and the weeks wore away, and perhaps they were not as perfectly happy as either Lucia or Fenwick had intended them to be. Lucia's position was that of queen and mistress of the household and it gave her natural inclination for power every opportunity for pretty little tyrannies, not always as acceptable to Lord Fenwick as she thought they would be. For his lordship had to the full height of its measure an Englishman's conception of the unapproachable authority of the husband. So though he submitted to Lucia's whims and ways with a smile or a compliment, he held a reserve position in his thoughts; he knew well—or thought he did—that his day was coming.

Little changes in the whole household had been brought about almost unavoidably. The Colonel went more to the hunting fields in the neighborhood, and he brought home with him more visitors than he had been used to do; so that there was a constant sense of entertainment in the old house. Lord Fenwick was frequently called to London by his lawyers or to Fenwick Castle by his mother, and Lucia was happily busy about her last preparations for the great event of her life.

But life goes on with a relentless pace, whether

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days are happy or unhappy. Christmas came at its appointed time and brought its usual gifts and feasting; and after it, Lucia began to count the days—only nine days—only eight. "Only seven days now," she said one bright winter morning to Ann, "and I don't believe your dress is even tried on, Ann. Yet you must go with me to the church."

"I will do nothing of the kind, miss; and if I did, pray who is to attend to the wedding breakfast?"

"Lord Fenwick said the man who would bring the wedding-cake from London would help you in arranging the table."

"I'll have no help. I'll set it myself, everything about it—or I will not touch a cup and saucer. The man from London is not wanted. He can leave the cake, and take himself off."

"Have you seen Lord Fenwick this morning, Ann? Did he breakfast in his room?"

"I saw him riding away with the Colonel. They are gone to worry some poor fox to death. Lord Fenwick will have a wife to worry soon; that will please him better than a dumb beast that can't talk back to him."

"Why do you hate Lord Fenwick so much, Ann? You know it hurts me."

"I never was one to change my opinions. I thought badly of Lord Fenwick twenty-three years

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ago, and I don't like him any better for running off with you—the dearest thing in all my life."

"I wonder if they will bring anyone back with them."

"I dare swear they will. They don't seem to be able to wear the evening hours away without strangers lately."

Then Lucia kissed Ann, and went away. She would not notice Ann's remark, not even in her own consciousness; but below all thought there lay a sense of wonder and worry. Had she really ceased to be quite sufficient for both Arthur and her father? And it was this sense of wonder and worry she answered when she whispered persuasively to herself:

"Oh, no! I have lost nothing. Father fears losing me—and Arthur! Why he is anxious only that the seven days should be over that he may have me altogether to himself. He hates company of all kinds and calls them interferers."

Yet, if she could have been honest with herself, she would have discovered that the monotony of love undiluted had invaded even her own intense satisfaction. She knew all her lover's fine speeches and she had sometimes felt his poetical quotations to be tiresome, and if they were from Browning, she pretended they were not understandable. As lovers they were in a false and even dangerous position, they were familiar, but not familiar enough for those last

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confidences which are only possible to the husband and wife. Both had their reservations; there were places in both lives into which Love had not yet come, and where it was possible he might come too late.

The shadow of this trouble was not quite absent from Lucia's sensitive nature, but she would not see it, nor make any inquiry, even to her own heart about it. To Lord Fenwick the shadow was quite distinct, but he was learned in love, and in love's devious ways, and it portended nothing to him but what he felt quite able to manage. He never thought of it but with a satisfactory smile.

And he was glad the trying period of love's probation was so near its close. An intensely proud man, he had felt wooing—especially when there was no longer opposition—to be something of a humiliation. He was going to make Lucia his wife, a peeress of the realm, a lady of the English Court, and yet he had been expected to wait on her time, to humor her foolish ideas and to lengthen his term of wooing nearly a month beyond his desires. It was certainly a pleasure to him in many ways to remember that in seven days more he would be a free lord of creation again, owing neither obedience nor submission to anyone but to his gracious Queen and his perfect mother.

Some feeling—which she did not attempt to define—made Lucia array herself in great splendor

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that evening. Even her father, who was a lover of fine clothing, wondered a little and asked her jokingly if she was going to a St. James' drawing-room, and she kissed him and said she wanted to wear her pretty frocks first of all for his pleasure. And the tears sprang to his eyes and he held her to his heart for a moment.

"Thank you, my dear!" he answered. "And I am glad to share my pleasure with so many of our friends, as will be here tonight. I brought home two ladies and two gentlemen with me and Lord Lothian and Mrs. Lorimer will be here by seven o'clock."

So at half-past seven a goodly company sat down to dinner at Abbot's Rest; and Lucia had never been so peerlessly beautiful, so magnificently gowned, nor shown to her friends a manner so gracious and graceful or so radiantly happy. Even Lord Fenwick, who had had a disappointing day in the field, was delighted anew. He anticipated the sensation her beauty would make at Court; he felt that he had won a great victory and tasted in advance the pleasant cup of other men's astonishment and envy.

During the third course of the dinner while Dixon was serving the Colonel's finest vintage and every face was beaming with pleasure, there was a loud knock at the door. Now the faculty of a knock at the door is to produce silence, and in this instance

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the silence was sudden and remarkable—remarkable because the booming sound of the iron knocker of the early monks was a fearsome sound, and sudden because in the midst of laughter and feasting no one expected the loud alarming summons of its fateful call.

The Colonel was the first to speak. He looked at John Studley, and said: "It will be some shepherd very ill and needing our help, Doctor;" but while he was thus speaking, a servant entered bringing a letter for Lord Fenwick. Lucia with a half-uttered exclamation stood up. She looked anxiously at her lover and said faintly, "Arthur what is it?"

"It is the worst thing that could happen in this world," he answered, as he rose in passionate haste and grief. "It is my mother calling me! She is dying! I must go to her! I must take the next train—Robert, what is it?"

Before the Colonel could answer, Lord Lothian said: "By driving quickly to Kenton, you can catch the North British train at Carlisle, about eleven o'clock."

"Dixon," said the Colonel, "you know the horses best. You must go with Lord Fenwick to Kenton."

"I will be ready in ten minutes, Dixon," said Fenwick and with the words he left the room, giving Lucia a glance so compelling that she instantly obeyed its demand. There was a lighted room

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opposite the dining-parlor, and Fenwick drew her into it.

"Lucia, my darling!" he said, in hurried accent. "You see, I must go at once. This letter is from Sir James Hobart, the famous London physician. He is with mother, and says I must not lose a moment if I would see her alive!"

"You know, Arthur, that it is only seven days——"

"I know! And I know I must see my mother or I should never have another happy hour! I cannot talk now. I will write to you from Fenwick Castle."

"Arthur!"

"Good-bye, darling!"

"But you will be here before"——

"There is Dixon with the gig."

"Oh, no not yet, Arthur."

"And I have a few orders for my valet, and I must get my purse, dearest. I will write, what I have no time to say. My beautiful Lucia!" And he hurriedly kissed her. Then she heard him going up the stairs, and a low agonizing cry followed him, though he heard it not. At the same moment her father entered the room. "Lucia," he said, "come to your guests. Your absence is inexcusable."

"I cannot! I cannot! Arthur is leaving me."

"For three or four days. What is that to make a sensation about? Come, my girl, you are a sol-

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dier's daughter. If this is a trouble, meet it bravely and cheerfully." With such words he persuaded her to return with him to the dinner table, and there she played the part Fate had assigned her without either affected indifference or exaggerated disappointment. The Colonel praised Fenwick's devotion to his mother, he spoke of their deep attachment and of all the sick lady had done for the house of Fenwick; and was sure only something pertaining greatly to its interest had forced her to recall her son when his wedding-day was so near at hand.

But apologizing conversations are never interesting. The social tone of the evening which had begun so happily, was sensibly lowered and the stay of the guests much shortened. In the main these results were the work of John Studley, for he knew the lady of Fenwick Castle and he knew also the inexorable traditions and customs of the family of Fenwick; and his heart failed him for fear of some unforeseen calamity.

However, to Lucia the shortening of the evening was a blessing. She thanked Studley with her eyes and played her part better because she understood he was curtailing the trial as much as possible; also she was glad that he himself remained with her father after all the other guests had departed. She did not feel as if she could talk with her father; he had taken her lover's impatient hurry to obey his

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mother's demand in far too complacent a temper. She thought he ought to have said, "Arthur, your absence at this time is impossible." She was sure that some definite promise as to his return should have been exacted and it was her father's place to speak for her in such an extremity.

So she slipped away to her room and almost immediately Ann came to her. Ann had heard of the bridegroom's journey and had no hesitation in characterizing it.

"It is a *mean do* as ever I heard tell of," she said with hot anger.

"A very famous doctor says Lady Fenwick is dying, Ann."

"I have heard famous doctors say that for more than twenty years, miss. She can't die and she won't die until she is called. She ought to be glad she is not wanted. What did John Studley say?"

"Dr. Studley said nothing. He looked almost sternly at Lord Fenwick, but he did not oppose his going away and he also looked at me but still said nothing."

"He did not know what to say. It is the hardest thing in the world for a man to discover what a woman really wants him to say. If they find out what they mutually think about the weather, it is as much as can be expected of them. And maybe Lord Arthur was only giving you a lesson."

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"A lesson?"

"Yes, letting you see that even when the wedding-bells were about to ring, he would put himself and his mother before you. If so, he will be back here in time to please himself. Men like to give the woman they are going to marry a little example of their superiority, especially in the way of putting self and company before her."

"There is no man that can serve me in that way. I have as many rights as Lord Fenwick, and as much of every right as he has. He may be equal to me, but he is not above me."

"Well, miss, them as thinks the wife inferior to the husband have the Bible on their side; and you had better remember this before you talk of your equality and the like of it. How can any woman hope for consideration with St. Paul standing between her and her husband? Now, I'll tell you what, you may talk against Paul and vow he was only a disappointed old bachelor, and people will smile and take it easy; but if, when you are Lady Fenwick, you talk of your equality and your rights as some women are beginning to do, everyone will be up in arms at once and you will hear words you won't like about the foundations of society and the sacredness of home."

"I shall not heed them. They can talk."

"Then that remarkable thing called respectability

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will be touched, and that will touch Lord Arthur to the quick; and he will take up the parable against you, and he has his mother's tongue, if it be not well oiled."

"We are away from our subject, Ann, and I shall not offend respectability in any way. I will honor my husband and he will honor me equally. I will obey him, and he will obey me equally. I will have justice, then I shall have love."

"I am glad to hear it, miss. Women have been snubbed and bullied long enough, but to say *they like it* is to add insult to injury. And I think you may take my word that Lord Arthur will be back in time for his wedding. This is a little scare. It is one of his mother's fine plans to increase his importance."

"So I am to be kept anxious to the last moment in order to increase Lord Arthur's importance."

"Just that, but it is only for a week. It is after midnight now, it is really Thursday morning, and next Thursday is your wedding-day."

And Lucia said, *"Perhaps!"* and the next moment was angry at herself for uttering the ill-omened word. A little crossly she added, "Lord Fenwick is on the train now, and I want to sleep. You say it is now Thursday—when will Lord Fenwick reach his home?"

"Tonight, easy, about ten o'clock."

"Then he could sit and talk with his mother all

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Friday and be back here on Saturday. Is that so?"

"He could do that if he wished. But say he took Saturday night's train, he could be here on Sunday night. That would give him two days with Lady Fenwick and he would have three days here to help us in the last work and way for Thursday morning. They begin to decorate the church next Tuesday, Matthew Holt told me. Lord Fenwick gave him the order, and he was to spare no expense in doing it. Good night, or rather, morning, miss, and I hope you will have some resting sleep."

"Why not, Ann? I heard father say he was leaving for the hunt soon after six. It is to be his last ride before my marriage."

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CHAPTER X

THIS, TOO, WILL PASS AWAY

Alas! how easily things go wrong
* * * * * * *
And there follows a mist and a weeping pain,
And life is never the same again.

WARM and sweet and rosy with comfortable sleep, Lucia awoke the following morning, and with a lazy sense of happy well-being stretched out her fair limbs, feeling the exercise to be just what she wished and required. In these moments of awakening there was no sense of trouble in her heart. She had forgotten that trouble existed, but it soon found her out and the mere name of it smote her with fear and anxiety.

Arthur had left her in dubious uncertainty. There had been no time for explanations or rearrangements. From the knock at the door to the receding sound of his departing vehicle only half an hour had elapsed, and of that half-hour she had received but a few minutes of promise and consolation.

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She rose hurriedly and began to dress, and was glad when Ann came to her with some letters and the information that the Colonel had left home at daylight and that her unserved breakfast was putting back the whole business of the day. "And you have to go to Kenton, miss, and would you like to have Elbert drive you there? He isn't a bad driver, though of course without Dixon's experience."

"I will have no one drive me, Ann. Tell Elbert to saddle my riding horse and be ready to attend me. I will be there and back in time for lunch." Then she laid her hand on Ann's arm, and looked at her anxiously. "Is it any use going, Ann?"

"Why not, dearie?"

"Arthur may not get back in time for our——"

"Such nonsense! He would be a man in a million if he did not get back."

"Well, he might just be that man in a million."

"Why are you boding ill to yourself? The master has no fears. He went away this morning whistling like a ploughboy, whistling just for very content. You must be wanting your breakfast to be so faint-hearted. I never saw the like, but a cup of coffee and a gallop to Kenton, will set you up a bit, no doubt of it."

In a measure, Ann was right. Lucia came back from Kenton glowing with the exercise, and quite able to fling every doubt and fear behind her. She

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enjoyed her lunch, for Ann served it and talked of her wedding preparations the whole time with more than her usual confidence and satisfaction. And indeed the meal was much delayed by this conversation, but it blended itself comfortably with the delicious food and cheering cup of Pekoe. Lucia rose from it happy and confident, the more so because just at this favorable moment the postman brought her a letter from Lord Fenwick which he had found time to write while waiting at Carlisle for the northeastern train.

It was a letter written in haste and turmoil and great trouble of heart, but it was also a passionate love letter and Lucia told herself that it was all she could expect or desire. He also explicitly stated in it that he would be back at Abbot's Rest three days before the blessed morning that he was to make her his wife.

With this white comfort next her heart she went to her room to rest. But she was far too happy and too exigently alive to be still. "There is sure to be someone calling," she thought. "They are so curious in the village, and they expect in some way to share all the pleasure of the ceremony. And Oh, how glad Arthur and I will be to escape all the fuss and feasting and wedding obligations! Why Arthur would even like to run away from breakfast and the cutting of the wedding-cake. I hope Lucy Pearson will

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get the ring in it. I think I will dress early—no-one can tell what may happen, or who will come."

An hour afterwards, just as she was pinning a spray of mistletoe in her hair, there was a sound of carriage wheels on the graveled walk, and immediately after the booming of the big iron knocker on the door. Its sound annoyed her. There was a modern bell for visitors, quite evident and handy, and she was provoked it had not been seen and used.

"It must be some stranger," she said irritably. "Anyone from the village knows the knocker is only for show; indeed I shall not forgive the postman using it last night. It frightened everyone, and the '*Haste*' notice was no excuse. He 'thought it was important, and that the family might have retired.' Such nonsense! The house was alight. And pray who can be knocking now? At four o'clock in the afternoon when everybody is busy about something. I wish Ann would come and tell me—I am getting nervous—I hate that old monkish knocker—I will ring for Ann. She ought to come to me about everything—especially at this time. She takes too much on herself and I shall tell her so." Then Ann tapped at the door, and before Lucia could speak entered the room. She looked grim and out of temper, as she said:

"Here is a young person from Fenwick Castle.

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She insists upon seeing you—says she has a letter for you from Lady Fenwick and so on——"

"Why did you not bring her to me at once?"

"Because I was trying to find out if she was coming with good or bad intent. I did not want you to be put out of the way unnecessarily, but she will tell me nothing."

"Then send her to me."

"Are you sure you want to see her?"

"Yes. Send her to me."

Ann with a disappointed air went about her errand, and Lucia walked to her largest mirror and looked at herself. The look was satisfactory. She had not specially intended to give to her appearance that air of wealth and power, which her lustrous satin and dull heavy gold ornaments imparted, but they happened to be exactly suitable, and she felt in their richness and splendor an invincible and satisfactory support, and the young person from Fenwick Castle was not likely to lessen the self-sufficiency of the richly gowned mistress of Abbot's Rest.

Yet Lucia felt curious about the stranger and her first thoughts connected her with Lord Fenwick. But as soon as she saw the woman she put that idea out of her mind as quite impossible. She was thirty-five years old, without beauty or grace of any kind, dusty and tired with travel, and evidently struggling with an irritable temper.

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"Are you Miss Ragnor?" she asked in an almost imperative manner.

"I am. What is it you want from Miss Ragnor?"

"Personally, nothing. I undertook to deliver this letter into your own hand, in order to oblige my friend, Lady Fenwick."

"If you are a friend of Lady Fenwick, I ought to know your name."

"My name is Frances Halliday. I am the constant companion of Lady Fenwick. Lord Arthur must have spoken of me."

"Never."

"We are quite friendly. I have heard him speak of you often—of your beauty and cleverness."

"You must be mistaken."

"Oh, no! You see I am always with Lady Fenwick. I may say, night and day."

"Perhaps you are her companion—or nurse."

"And secretary, and everything else. She disliked to part with me even for an hour, but she was sicker than usual and she felt that you ought to be informed of certain things before you married Lord Arthur."

"You had better take back the letter. There is absolutely nothing that anyone could tell me of Lord Fenwick, which would prevent my marriage to him."

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"But you must read the letter. I was ordered to bring back your answer."

"Lady Fenwick's 'orders' cannot affect me, in any way."

"But I entreat you, Miss Ragnor, to read the letter. If I go back without your answer, it may ruin me. I hope you will consider a poor girl who has to obey Lady Fenwick's orders or lose the only home she has."

"Put the letter down on the table."

The woman did so, and it lay on the dark mahogany, its large square of white paper, splotched with an immense red seal carrying the Fenwick arms. Both Lucia and her visitor were standing by the table and Lucia looked at the letter and then reflected it was really hers. A great curiosity sprang up in her heart. She longed to know what Lady Fenwick had to tell of her lover and after a few moments of hesitation she lifted and opened the letter.

"You have broken the seal to pieces," said the woman, pointing to the fragments lying on the table. "My lady would be very angry if she knew it. She does not permit a seal bearing the Fenwick arms to be broken—we cut around them."

"The poor seal! I suppose you wrote this letter?"

"Naturally, as I am her ladyship's secretary."

"Then you shall read it to me."

"I would rather not."

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To this letter Lucia listened with a smiling composure and when comment was necessary, her opinions were clear and positive and given without any sign of annoyance.

"You will tell Lady Fenwick from me that I consider the information she has given me concerning Lord Arthur Fenwick greatly to his credit. Not many young men would have acted in so generous a manner. I honor him for it."

"Will you be so kind, Miss Ragnor, as to write that message to Lady Fenwick. She will not believe it unless you do so."

"Very well, I will write it; and in the meantime, you must have some rest and refreshment." As she spoke she touched a bell, and Ann answered it almost immediately.

"Miss Halliday is in your care now, Mrs. Idle. She is hungry and weary. See that she gets a good meal, and is taken to the railway station. Is Dixon home yet?"

"No, miss, nor like to be. Dixon can find resting places on every road."

"Then send Elbert with Miss Halliday."

Ann was very willing to take charge of the guest from Fenwick. She had many memories of the gloomly, stately, old castle, and she was soon conversing very familiarly with its messenger. And as secrecy was not one of Miss Halliday's strong points,

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"I wish it."

She laid the letter before her, and the woman lifted and read it aloud.

"DEAR MISS RAGNOR:

"The information I shall give you in this letter is proper for you to know, so I shall make no apologies for doing my duty. My son Arthur, whom you intend marrying, seduced a beautiful girl seventeen year ago, and he still retains a very great liking or esteem, or whatever you choose to call it, for her. He has two very handsome sons by her, whom Arthur is educating at Rugby, and he purposes after their college training is over to put the oldest in the army and to make a lawyer of the younger. The boys have often been to Fenwick Castle. I enjoy their company, and Arthur is devoted to them. The mother is living in Rugby. I hear that my son upon his engagement to you bid her farewell and settled three hundred pounds a year upon her with a house in Kenwick in which she resided while the boys were young. I might amplify these facts but I have said sufficient to enable you to judge of your future position with Arthur. I have not been in my usual health lately, and I fear I may not live to give you the advice I would do, if you were here; but I am told you are a young lady of quite extraordinary qualities, so I hope the simple facts will be your sufficient guide.

Yours,

HENRIETTA FENWICK."

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it took Ann but little time and trouble to discover the head and front of the visitor's business with Miss Ragnor. Likewise it is needless to say, that Miss Ragnor's extraordinary laxity about conjugal rights excited in both ladies great astonishment and very pronounced opinions.

"There is not an old gammer in our village," said Ann, "who would stand by such-like ideas and feelings, and I do say such ways with unlawful wives and children would soon turn respectable society upside down. If I was Miss Ragnor, I would give Lord Fenwick a short, sharp farewell and let him go his own way. I suppose the old lady is worrying the castle deaf, dumb, and blind about it."

"Yes, about the marriage she has her opinions and you know what stuff they are made of. I rather think she likes the two boys very much—for her—and I'll warrant their mother would be more welcome than your young lady, though I have heard say she has a drop or two of Fenwick blood in her."

"Not her! She is Ragnor all through, and has been well brought up. Proud, but kind; yes very kind and considerate. I may say I brought her up myself, so I'm not speaking without knowledge. Have you ever seen a man—a handsome scamp he is—called Dick, about Fenwick?"

"Dick? Dick Idle? Yes, I know the man. Is he any relation of yours?"

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"Only my own, lawful, married husband."

"Never! Never!"

"Sure as the Gospels."

"Well! Well! Wonders never cease! He is mad in love with a girl called Nora Bryan and she says they are engaged."

"You might let Nora know."

"She is a simple, conceited thing, but I'll tell her. I'll tell her. And he is really a married man?"

"If book, priest and ring can make him so. Dick Idle is my man, my lawful husband."

"Well! Well! This news will pull Nora's vanity down a bit; and how a young lady like Miss Ragnor who is rich and quite pretty can put up with a husband who had such a past, is more than I can make out."

"Miss Ragnor is considered quite a beauty."

"Oh! Do you think so? She isn't my taste at all. The other woman is so different every way—a perfect rose you know—long, straight, golden hair, braided like a crown round her head, and eyes like heaven, so full of light and love. And her complexion! Just a baffling wonder! She is as tall as my lord himself, and she walks like a queen."

"Does she dress herself well?"

"She makes pictures of herself. Morning, noon, or night, she is just what you want to see. And she adores Lord Fenwick, and he adored her once, but

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there—she had everyone's heart in her hand. The village went into mourning when she left her little place half-a-dozen miles north of it, but she had been there eight years, and never had a wrong word with anyone. I did hear that her sweet temper and gentle tongue was the great secret of her power over Lord Fenwick."

"I wouldn't wonder," answered Ann with considerable temper. "Men like women who have no minds, and no self, and who say yes and amen to everything they say. Here is Elbert with the gig. You will have to be going, I suppose, but I am glad to have seen you, Miss Halliday, and when next you meet Nora Bryan—in a bit of a crowd—tell her you had a cup of tea with Dick Idle's wife and that she made her welcome to Dick Idle—such as he is."

About five o'clock the Colonel returned home. He was a little tired but in very high spirits. He had been, he said, in the finest of hunting countries and met for the first time Richard Yates, the greatest rider of his day, on his horse Rambumptious—"a horse made to measure, and foaled to order," cried the Colonel, enthusiastically. "You should have seen Yates mount him, Lucia. Rambumptious stared at Yates and Yates stared at Rambumptious, then he leaped upon his back and rode him all day and sixteen miles home when the chase was over."

"Is he a fine huntsman?"

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"No finer in all England; and I can tell you, Lucia, it is as difficult to find a perfect huntsman as a good prime minister. We found the fox at Rycot pasture, and got away with him up wind. Then I saw Yates and his horse do what no other man or horse would dare or attempt to do. There is a bullfinch hedge of fifty years growth, high and strong with a deep wide ditch on one side of it between Rycot and Elwyth, and I would have sworn that no horse could clear it. Yet Yates on Rambumptious charged at full speed and got to the other side so cleanly that the bushes closed after him and his horse, as if a bird had hopped through them."

"How fond you are of the field, father."

"Well, my dear, I am a cavalry officer, and our great duke said that the hunting field was the nursery of good officers."

"Are the Cumberland and Westmoreland hunts the finest in England?"

"No! No! The Melton Mowbray hunt is the finest. What a pack of hounds they have! Every one good. Legs straight as arrows—backs broad—necks thick—tails thick and bushy—heads all up and tails down. I have seen twenty couple of these hounds on the field on a fine frosty morning and the huntsmen in their scarlet and green uniforms—crack riders all of them—crossing our path in every direction. Fine spirited horses, too, but well controlled."

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"Still there are bad falls in the field, father. Squire Ashborn has never walked a step since he was thrown two years ago."

"Very true, but if Squire Ashborn had been *sitting upright* his balance would have been just; then the jerk forward of his horse, would have thrown his shoulders backward, and in such a case, if a horse thinks proper to fall, *he* is the sufferer. He cuts his forehead, hurts his nose, breaks his knees, or bruises his chest, while his head, neck, forelegs, and forepart of his body are forced into each other like the joints of a telescope, and thus form a buffer to the rider. The great secret of safety in the hunting field, Lucia, is to sit upright. If a man does that, he will pull out, as he should do. I suppose we shall hear from Arthur tomorrow. I could not help thinking of him at Rycot."

"Is Arthur a good huntsman?"

"Not very. He is a fine diplomat, and the qualities of the two characters are essentially different. Do you feel better about his little journey today?

"No, father I do not."

"What else could the man do? In his place what would you have done?"

"I would have risen to the occasion. I would have stood up and said, 'Colonel Ragnor, my mother is sick, and sends for me. She is old and any increase of sickness may be fatal to her. Then you know that

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her decease will put off my marriage for at least a year. Dr. John Studley here present, is an ordained clergyman of the Church of England. I ask that he may now and here perform the necessary rites of marriage. Then I can take my wife with me to Fenwick.' That is what you would have done. There was nothing to prevent the unusual ceremony; there was everything to excuse it, if indeed any excuse was necessary."

"I am astonished, Lucia, that Arthur did not think of such an easy way out of the dilemma. I believe if I had been in his place I should have remembered this plan. It is quite natural, and it is a wonder John Studley did not propose it. But, by it, you would have disappointed both your friends and the whole village."

"I had a letter today from Lady Fenwick. She sent it by her companion, maid, or secretary—a clever person, who is doubtless accustomed to seeing what does not exist and hearing what was never spoken of. I do not mean to say that she was accustomed to lying. I only mean that she was reading my thoughts, and seeing the events and results of marriage between Arthur and myself, though they were, as yet, hardly dreamed of. She took back with her from Abbot's Rest plenty of material for future machinations."

"What did Lady Fenwick write about?"

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Then she gave him Lady Fenwick's letter to read and for a few minutes there was silence between them. But Lucia noticed a faint smile on her father's face, and he asked, "Did you answer the letter?"

"Yes. I told her I respected Arthur for his generous care of one who had been so much to him. Was that right, sir?"

"A man will take a man's view of such a question, Lucia, and generally a woman will take a woman's."

"Ought not men and women, father, to look at such a subject in the same manner?"

"That is not the way they do, Lucia. Both sexes look at it in a one-eyed manner."

"Why do they do so, father?"

"Because great privileges would demand equal responsibilities, and many of these responsibilities women cannot assume."

"But, father, why cannot they assume them?"

"They must become unnatural, and unwomanly to do so. Thus bravery is to a man, all that chastity is to a woman. The want of courage disgraces a man. There is little inquiry as to his chastity. If a woman cheats at cards, we laugh and call her a 'pretty little fraud.' For the same fault we send a man to a disgraceful Coventry. Men do not complain of that national chivalry which compels them to postpone their own safety in times of danger until the women and children are cared for. If a woman

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in the hour of suffering or calamity trembles, faints, or weeps, it is no disgrace to her; it is natural and womanly and she is loved all the same; but such weakness in a man fills everyone with contempt for his weakness."

"Should that be so?"

"Whether it should or not, does not influence the matter. But you may see, Lucia, that virtues have a distinct sex element, and the virtue of chastity is pre-eminently a feminine virtue. What did you say to Lady Fenwick in reference to Arthur's past life?"

"I told her, father, that I had nothing to do with Arthur's life, prior to his engagement to myself; it did not concern me what he had done with his money or what he had done with his time. The friends of his past were his friends, not mine, and their characters quite outside of my criticism."

"You are quite right. Whatever conditions marriage imposes for the future the conditions of the past must be ignored. You have nothing to do with Arthur's past."

"Then, my dear father, why did you not let us marry in the spring?"

"My dear Lucia, I am talking now of things society condemns, or condones. In the spring, I thought myself to be defending you against a man who had committed a crime. There is a difference—a great difference. I know a little of the girl; she was the

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daughter of a very respectable man, a clerk in Ulverston Bank, a most beautiful creature, well educated, too—everyone wondered about it. I am glad that Arthur has behaved so handsomely to her. How soon should we hear from Arthur? Have you no word yet?"

"Ten words by telegram."

"He will write you from Fenwick," said the Colonel.

"He said he would. When should that letter be here?"

"You will get it Monday morning, certainly. It might be here on Sunday, but would not be delivered."

"Monday then?"

"Yes, Monday."

But Monday morning brought no letter and Lucia was restless and silent and kept the solitude of her own room. Before the evening mail the Colonel had begun to share his daughter's anxiety. He hardly knew why, but he wandered between the house and the stable and was cross because Lucia did not bring her trouble to him.

"For it is only some womanly fret or freit," he said to Ann, "that I could likely dispel with a few words."

In the meantime the wedding preparations went on but they had lost their vim and cheerful bustle.

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Ann was cross and nothing appeared to be going as it should do. So the day was hard to get over but the night mail brought Lucia a letter from her lover. It was far from pleasing her. It was full of information about Lady Fenwick—how dreadfully ill she was—how glad she had been to see him—how much everything at Fenwick needed his oversight—how hopeless the great physician from London was of Lady Fenwick's recovery. Such and such-like topics filled a very long letter; though towards the last, he remembered how swiftly his marriage day was coming, and said he hoped to follow the letter immediately. In a postscript he feared they would have to change their honeymoon plans, but he would speak of that change, when he saw her on Tuesday.

Lucia brought the letter to her father, and he read it with tightly compressed lips, and such angry gleams in his eyes as made a distinct light beneath them. Yet he parried his feelings and said with assumed pity, "I am sorry for Arthur; he is in a very difficult position."

"So am I, father!"

"To be sure you are. But we must make the best of whatever is beyond our control. Lady Fenwick and her sickness, is decidedly so. You will have all Wednesday to rearrange your plans."

"I will rearrange nothing."

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"Nonsense! You are no match for circumstances."

Then Lucia went to her room and found Ann there. "These are your last habit shirts, miss. I have done them up myself; if you go to France Lord Fenwick will wish you to ride; he knows how handsome you look on horseback."

"Ann, what do you think of the situation—what do you think really?"

"Really, I don't like it. Lord Fenwick should never have left Abbot's Rest without his wife. Lady Fenwick would not let him return for you. She would die to prevent it—yes, she would die gladly."

"What good would that do?"

"Keep Lord Fenwick unmarried for a year's mourning for her. Surely you know that, miss."

"Oh, Ann, Ann! I never thought of such a thing!"

"Why, miss, no respectable people marry or give in marriage for a year after a death in the family. They don't even go to balls. It would be considered disrespectful to the dead, and the living would be looked down on for such a want of duty, honor, and regard for those who had gone away. Your father was a mourner for many a year—never went to either ball or wedding, or anything gay."

Then if Lady Fenwick should die before Thursday, Arthur could not marry me for a year. Is that what you mean?"

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"Yes, miss."

"Then I would never marry him at all."

"Perhaps that might be a good thing for you. One never knows!"

"Are all my trunks in traveling order, Ann?"

"All of them ready to start. The keys are only to turn in the last two."

"Lord Fenwick in his letter of this morning says he will be here tonight."

"We shall see," replied Ann doubtfully.

There was indeed a kind of lagging and depression in the whole household. It appeared to spring up soon after breakfast and to infect every room and every person with its shadow. The Colonel alone would not acknowledge its presence. He had been in the village watching the men take down the Christmas decorations in the church, preparatory to dressing it for the marriage ceremony. He had heard the organist practising the bridal music. He had called at the rectory and seen pretty Lucy Pearson in her bridesmaid's gown of pale blue. He had heard no conversation from anyone which did not refer to his daughter's marriage to Lord Fenwick, and he brought home with him that certain strong conviction, which comes from the conduct and affirmations of many of one opinion. For very few knew of Lord Fenwick's absence, and still fewer would have believed that a man of wealth

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and power would find it impossible to keep his wedding-day.

Tuesday night came but it brought only a despairing letter from Lord Fenwick. He said his mother was unconscious and at the point of death and that unless there was a change for the better, she would probably die during the small hours of Wednesday morning. The letter read and felt as if steeped in sorrow. Lucia left it lying on the table, and went away without a word, and her father thought it best to make no effort to reason with her. It was a trouble she must fight out alone; none but her good angel could help or strengthen her.

On Wednesday morning Lady Fenwick died at three o'clock and before noon everyone in and around Abbot's Rest knew that there would be no marriage for a year at least. Indeed the Colonel advocated this delay with a quite unreasonable positiveness. He took the telegram to his daughter, and asked her to consider what steps she would like him to take.

"Father, has not Arthur written and given you his wishes and directions?"

"No. I may have a letter by tonight's mail, but the decoration of the church, for instance, should be stopped at once. And there are orders out for carriages, for bell-ringing, and a variety of other things. As far as possible also invitations must be counter-

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manded by telegraph, and I shall need help—a great deal of help."

"Father, go to Dr. Studley. While we are talking about things, he will be doing them. The case of what is to be done or said here, has gone from me. Give me an hour; after that I will help you all I can."

"You are right. Studley will do all that should be done. But for heaven's sake, do not cry, Lucia. I can bear anything but that."

"Then leave me an hour, father. It is all very cruel, and Arthur ought to have foreseen and prevented this shaming sorrow."

"Arthur is not to blame."

"He knew his mother's temper and tactics and should have forestalled them."

"Do be reasonable."

"He knew his mother's condition. He ought to have married me last Thursday. Someone ought to have suggested the ceremony. Such a senseless custom of mourning! There are no people on earth so stupid as the English, unless it be the Scotch. Does anyone mourn a year? I shall not mourn one moment. I think an old woman so maliciously wicked ought to be dead, and Arthur must in his heart rejoice that he is freed from her exasperating tyranny."

"Suppose it had been your father instead of

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Arthur's mother who had died. Would you have thought it right to go forward with your marriage?"

"You are supposing the question under entirely new conditions, father. You would have acted differently. I should have felt differently. Everything would be changed by a change of conditions. I can imagine very probable circumstances that would have excused the marriage—if it needed excuse. If the marriage was a proper marriage, death could only add a touch of solemnity to a rite never made as solemn as it ought to be. Marriage is really a new life; there are better ways of entering it, than by eating and drinking and dancing. But what is the use of talking? You had better see to Studley. He will relieve you of all trouble incidental to the miserable affair, and when you return I will be able to consider our destination, for I must leave here early tomorrow."

"You are talking great rant. You cannot leave here. Arthur will come no doubt as soon as the funeral is over. Really, I ought to go to the funeral. Lady Fenwick was my mother's half-sister; I think Arthur will feel it very keenly if I do not go to Fenwick. I had selfishly forgotten this side of the question."

"Father, you had better see Dr. Studley. I hope it will not be too selfish to inform our friends and

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the public that the death of Lord Fenwick's mother prevents him honoring his promise to the girl he was to make his wife."

"It is not a nice position for Lord Fenwick to be placed in, but every man of property and family will understand it and sympathize with him," observed the Colonel.

"And the forsaken girl? What of her?"

"She is not forsaken. Let her wait the appointed hour. It will come in its proper time."

"I think it is exceedingly doubtful. Make haste, father. I want to leave very early in the morning."

"Where do you want to go?"

"I do not know until I have a talk with you."

"I do not approve of your leaving your own home. It is not the correct thing to do. At any rate you must wait until we hear from Arthur. He will want to see you after the funeral."

"I will not see him. Let him keep away from me. I am going somewhere to hide myself. I know how people will look at me, and what they will say."

"Wait till you get Arthur's next letter. That is only fair. Dear me! I hope Arthur will not feel hurt at my absence."

"Go to Fenwick, by all means, father. The woman will not be buried until Saturday. You have plenty of time."

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"I will wait for Arthur's next letter. It will be here tonight or in the morning."

"In the morning may be too late for me. I should like to leave tonight. Tomorrow ought to have been my wedding-day. I cannot stay here—you ought not to ask me."

"Well, I will go and ask Studley to take my place. Of course, he will attend Lady Fenwick's funeral, but that will not take place until Saturday—perhaps Monday. Many of the Fenwicks will have a long journey to take, but they will all be present. Lady Fenwick is very much respected."

Lucia threw herself on her bed and did not answer, and the Colonel suddenly became aware of how much there was to *undo,* and how little time was left for the undoing. So with a few words of commonplace advice he hurriedly left the room, and when Lucia heard him riding swiftly down the avenue, she rang her bell, and it was answered instantly by Ann Idle.

"I knew you were wanting me, dearie! What can Ann do for you?"

"Everything that can now be done, Ann. First, send all my trunks to the railway station. Are they addressed?"

"Eight of them are locked, strapped, and addressed to Fenwick Castle."

"Tear off that address. I will give you another. Tell Dixon to get the wagon and take them to the

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railway station and when he is ready the new address will be ready."

In half an hour the change had been effected, and Lucia from her window watched Dixon driving the trunks to the railway station. Ann had made no opposition and asked no questions. There was something about the mood and manner of her young mistress which denied all interference—a touch of her father's temper and stubbornness that scouted all advice or meddling. Silent, with an air irrevocable and unalterable in purpose, she sent away all that she possessed, and Ann found her accustomed freedom of speech desert her. She saw that the trunks had been readdressed to a London hotel, but she found no words that seemed fitting to ask for a reason for this. She noticed that the Colonel had laid out some entirely black clothing and she had wondered whether he really meant to wear mourning for Lady Fenwick, and, further, if he intended to go to the funeral.

This last question she finally ventured to propound to Lucia. It was answered by an indignant negative. "I shall not permit it," she said. "I have no one but father, and he must go with me and stay with me."

"Tell me, honey, where you are going? Wherever it is, Ann must go with you."

"O Ann! Ann! My heart is nearly broken with

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wounded love and cruel shame. This is the second time my marriage with Arthur has been prevented, and you know what everyone will say. I cannot bear to see the faces of those who have been with me the last few months. I have been too happy, Ann, too set up with my great fortune, and too ready to talk of all I intended to do for everyone I knew. They will make sport of me—all kinds of sport—and I deserve it! Oh, yes, I deserve it!"

"You do not. You have only been kind as you could be. Who can help death? It comes from the will of God—or the devil. What do you want Ann to do, dearie?"

"I do not know what will come about in a year, Ann, but if I do not marry Arthur, at the end of it, then I will never come back to Abbot's Rest. I am going somewhere for a year and you must go with me."

"What will come of the house?"

"Dixon and John Studley will be sufficient to care for the house, after you have put all safely away. Father must go with us."

"Tomorrow morning?"

"I shall leave tomorrow morning by the eight o'clock train. I was to be married at half-past eleven. I shall be in London at that time."

I cannot leave the house as it is, dearie. Think of the silver and crystal, the fine linen and bedding,

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the expensive wines and furniture. It will take me a hard week's work."

"Then, Ann, I will wait in London for you."

"And, there is the wonderful store of good things to eat we have been preparing; what is to be done with them?"

"Send the Pearsons the best of the game and the big Norfolk turkey and your finest pastry and confectionery. Give all the rest to the poor women and children of the village. Studley will look after the bell-ringers and pay for father what has to be paid."

Until it was quite dark, the Colonel and Studley were busy in the melancholy business of *undoing* and *unsaying,* and the Colonel came home in a real or a pretended bad temper. Ann thought it was real. Lucia was sure it was all put on for the purpose of suppressing any show of anger or feeling on her part and this idea aroused in her a fixed determination to carry out her own desires.

In the first place, the Colonel came to the dinner table with the orthodox band of crêpe round the sleeve of his black coat, and casting a look of astonishment and displeasure upon his daughter's gay crimson satin, asked, "Have you not a black dress in your wardrobe, Lucia?"

"I have several, father."

"Why, then, do you not wear one?"

"I do not like black."

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"But you must wear it—for Arthur's sake. He will be deeply hurt at any omission of respect in the mourning for Lady Fenwick."

"I do not mourn for Lady Fenwick. I shall make no pretence of doing so."

"Have you considered what remarks will be made on its omission?"

"No. I am indifferent to them. I shall go to some place where Lady Fenwick was never heard of."

"You will remain here—in Abbot's Rest—at least for some time."

"I wish to leave tomorrow morning by the eight o'clock train. I expect you will go with me, father. You ought to do so. If you will not, I shall take Ann. We are both ready."

"What foolishness you are talking! You cannot go away tomorrow. It would be an act of cowardice that I shall not permit you to perpetrate."

"You would prefer me to stay here, and be the mock of every fool, and the jibe of every ill-natured man and woman. You prevented most unjustly my marriage in the spring. Now an old woman of eighty locks the door against it, but I ought not to fret over such a bridegroom. Had he been worthy of me, he would have found out a way."

"It is not Arthur's fault."

"It is. If he had come to me in the spring—if he

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had found ten minutes to see me—and he could have done so easily—I would have run away with him. But he was afraid of his mother. Tied to her apron string, as he always has been. If he or you had but spoken of our marriage the night we first heard of Lady Fenwick's sickness, the enthusiasm of the company would have carried it through, for it was as if some power had foreseen and prepared for it. There was a feast on the table, there was a gay company of friends, I fittingly attired, and Arthur would probably have delayed an hour so that this dreadful position might have been spared me."

"You talk like a wicked, disobedient girl. I and Dr. Studley have had some most unpleasant hours undoing the foolish or excessive preparations made for your intended marriage. I was always in favor of two or three friends and a plain religious ceremony."

"The excessive preparations came from Arthur's desires."

"Instigated by your vanity and extravagance."

"Father, I am suffering enough. The lash of your reproofs is unnecessary. But when you are capable of such cruel judgment and hard words, what can I expect from jealous acquaintances and suspicious strangers?"

"I will tell you what you may expect—perhaps then you will see that it is your best policy to remain

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under your father's roof and protection. Some will say, 'It is a very queer thing—a few months since they should have been married, but Lord Fenwick disappeared—sick, they said—but who knows what was the matter; now he runs away because he hears his mother is sick. Dear me! It is a queer world! I'm dashed sorry for the girl. Some man may interpose. She's a nice girl, and pretty beyond the usual, but very high-tempered they do say who ought to know. And women are sly creatures; she was too kind and too fair to be without a lover while the real lover was sulking.' That is the way people will talk."

"I suppose it is—from what I have observed."

"Well then, be wise and stand by your own good name. The matter has been explained to all our friends, the *Westmoreland Gazette* will say what is necessary to the public, and the young people who were to take part in what I must still call your extravagant ideas have had the circumstance made clear as daylight to them."

"They will believe nothing but their own suspicions and desires."

"And if you left suddenly and clandestinely and without your father's company and protection, they would be justified in saying what they suspected and thought. Do you not also see that if Arthur heard of your disappearance, he would either remain at

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Fenwick or he would go somewhere to try and find you—but he would not come here; and that circumstance alone, would give color to the worst anyone would care to say."

Lucia had not taken this last argument of the Colonel into her consideration in any respect. It was like a gate shut in her face. She did not know how to get through it or over it, and she remained silent. But the sorrow and perplexity on her white face touched the Colonel deeply, and he said in a much kinder voice:

"Lucia, remain here for a few days. No one will dare to say an unkind or disrespectful word of you or to you while I stand at your side. Arthur will come here as soon as the funeral is over. He will meet in your society all our friends. He will remain long enough to talk to all who have known him. There will be no question but the true one, and no one can manufacture wrong out of that. There will be immense interests of various kinds relating to Fenwick to examine and put in business shape, and Arthur will have much to do for many weeks or months, but as soon as his presence has put all right here then I will go away with you and we will get over the interval as happily as we can. What do you say to this, the only reasonable course left you?"

"And tomorrow was to have been my wedding-day! O father, father, I am heart-broken with shame

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and grief!" and with these words she burst into passionate sobbing and weeping. Colonel Ragnor watched her a moment or two. He had never before seen a woman in such an abandon of sorrow, and while he was wondering what to do and going to touch the bell for Ann, Ann entered the room, irate, flaming, and ready to fight Lucia's battle. She took Lucia to her breast, and petted and consoled her with words very uncomplimentary both to the Colonel and Lord Fenwick, to the living and the dead, and to all concerned.

"Your poor, hunted, little lamb!" she cried. "Is he worrying you to death, darling?"

"O Ann, Ann! If my mother was only alive tonight! She would pity me! It is not my fault, is it, Ann? Yet I am scolded, as if I could help Lady Fenwick dying. And about the ices and cakes and flowers and bell-ringers, and all the extravagance. It is not my fault, is it, Ann?"

"Not a bit of it. It is the Colonel's fault, and Lord Fenwick's fault, and I suppose the lord can pay for it."

"Ann!"

"Yes, Colonel, it is. Miss Lucia has been fairly scrimpy. The darling has not spent half enough on her clothes. Not half enough! She had to have a wedding garment, I suppose. Jesus Christ knew that much—all the rest just came natural. I call this a

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very uncommon way of carrying on against a little lass heart-broken with sorrow and disappointment. I wish her mother was alive! God knows she needs her!"

"Ann, if you talk that way you must leave my presence."

"Yes, sir, and your house too—a haunted, gloomy, God-forsaken place, it is. And when I go, I will take my little one with me. I'd be reasonable, sir, for once in a lifetime, if I was you."

"I want nothing, Ann, but that she should remain at home with me until after Lord Fenwick has been here. You must see how necessary this is."

"No, sir, I do not see it. She had better never see him again. Take her away or I'll go with her myself, and then what will come of this house I wonder?"

The Colonel made a movement of great impatience. "There is no use talking to women," he muttered. "They won't see the right from the wrong—they won't do it."

"You have an uncommon way of looking at things, Colonel Ragnor. You know that by tomorrow at this time all the fellside will be ringing with Lucia Ragnor. She must go away."

"She will stay *here* with me as long as I think proper and necessary. Go and send Dixon to wait on me. I want my dinner. I have been in the saddle all day nearly."

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"Dixon? Yes, sir! To be sure you are hungry, and a hungry man is an angry man. Miss Lucia should have waited——"

"Lucia, come to your place at the table. When you have had your dinner you will be more reasonable."

But Lucia left the room with Ann, saying as she went something about her mother which made the Colonel very uncomfortable. He missed their full import, but the word *mother* was quite sufficient. He felt as if his long-lost Vera was at his side, and mentally he began to justify himself to her. And his dinner was spoiled. His hunger was gone and nothing tasted right to him.

Lucia fared better than her father. Ann brought to her room a tray full of delicate and delicious food, and then coaxed her to eat by all those kindly, little personal arguments whose convincingness women know so well—"You must eat, honey, you will have a hard day tomorrow—whatever comes or goes. This breast of grouse will keep up your courage; grouse are game-birds, and you will require something to help you to stand up to your father—he's in a nasty temper. I never saw him in the like before."

"Perhaps he is right, Ann."

"If you have made up your mind to go away in the morning, don't you let yourself even think he

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might be right. Be sure *you* are right, and *he* is wrong, or you will have no comfort. He did say one thing, that has a sound of common-sense in it. It struck me as reasonable because it took into account the wickedness of men and women."

"I think everything he said was against me."

"Like enough! Men can't bear crying women, especially if it's time for eating; but he did remark that he wanted you to stay until Lord Fenwick came here after the funeral. He wanted folks round to see there was no quarrel and no turn-back for you; that it was really death that parted you for the present, and not ill will. That was not bad sense. People have to believe their own eyes and ears and he likely thought you were a soldier's daughter, and could do what you had to do, however disagreeable it might be, and pass it off as if it was a smiling every-day affair. It is a man's way to think a woman is just what he wants her to be. Some women can be it and some wouldn't if they could, but it is the pride of my heart to say that Lucia Ragnor knows what is right and wrong and will always do the right whether she likes its way or not."

"Ann, you may say that surely and I am going to consider now whether my father's plan is better than mine. If so, I shall follow it."

"To be sure you will. Indeed, miss, you could so easily turn your own sorrow into the joy of others

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that the fellside would ring with your praise and that would be better than the bit of foolish romance that would come out of running away and hiding yourself. What for should you do the like of that? Colonel Ragnor's daughter may look the world in the face and never droop an eyelash. The Colonel will also, no doubt, come to his best self in the night, for there are words said at night you couldn't hear in the day."

Perhaps the Colonel heard some of these counsels of the night, for he rose in that calm and cheerful mood, which is disposed to make the best of any situation. The putting off of Lucia's marriage allowed him to retain his daughter for at least another year and that was a compensation adequate and satisfactory. For he knew well that the ceremony of "giving away" in the marriage rite was an actual and very real surrender. After it his daughter would never be the same; at the very best, he might perhaps hope to share what was once all his own.

And Lucia after her night's session with her own heart and her own best interests, was also wisely disposed. It was truly the day she had set apart in sweet and loving thought as her wedding-day, and it had come with disappointment only. The cold dawn broke silently and there was no carillon of bells as she had planned there should be, chiming joyously.

Hail happy morn!

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But she met her father with smiles and that cheerful face which is the right of the breakfast table, and instantly and confidentially opened the subject that was the only interesting one at that time.

"Father," she said, "I have thought a great deal about what you advised and I have come to the conclusion that you are right—as you always are—and that I will do cheerfully all you propose." Then he opened his arms and took her to his heart, and they sat down to talk the matter thoroughly over. The few points relating to her continuance at Abbot's Rest were so evidently wise and prudent, that they were soon arranged and agreed to. Then Lucia asked:

"What must be done with all the luxuries prepared for the wedding-guests, father?"

"I have thought of that, Lucia. We have eight shepherds on the fells, and all of the eight must have a fine Norfolk turkey and what game and sweetmeats Ann thinks right. We will have the Pearsons and Dr. Studley to dine with us and give them the best of all the good things prepared. Whatever is over Dr. Studley will direct to the old and poor and sick in the village so that after all our marriage feast may actually resemble the one described by St. Matthew where the wedding-guests were furnished from the highways because those bidden did not come."

"I think your idea a very good one father. and

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we will call in Ann and tell her to prepare baskets and messengers. And you will see Dr. Studley and the rector yourself, will you not?"

"I will certainly do so," and he touched the little silver bell at his side. Its clear, sweet tinkle brought Ann in a moment or two, and she looked so weary and careworn and so full of trouble, that Lucia could not resist the impulse which made her haste to comfort her. "Ann," she cried, "we are going to send all the good things prepared for my wedding to the families of the shepherds and to the old and poor and sick in the village."

"That is the first bit of good tidings this weary wedding-feast has brought me," she answered, and then from her more intimate knowledge of the people to be favored, she made some excellent plans and suggestions, which she was left with absolute power to carry out according to her judgment and desire.

The little dinner for the Colonel's intimates was also splendidly ordered, and Lucia so far followed popular feeling as to wear black with a great deal of white trimmings, or perhaps it was white, with a great deal of black trimming, but it was a concession that greatly pleased her father and brightened his face with the light she loved best to see there.

Dr. Studley brought with him a loving letter from Lord Fenwick, and a little precious case containing the plain gold marriage ring, and a guard for it

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composed of the most splendid gems. He desired her to put it on then and there for his sake, and promised to see her as soon as it was possible to do so. Dr. Studley had gone down to the village for this letter and ring, and Lucia thoroughly understood the kindness of heart, that had made him remember that the earlier a love-letter comes, the welcomer it is. She thanked him with a glance of her beautiful eyes, and asked him as they stood quietly together and a little apart from the other guests to put the rings upon her finger, and with a whispered blessing he did so.

That was on Thursday night and there was a short note from Fenwick on Friday morning, after that complete silence for three days. Lucia became very unhappy and remained in her room. She was too tired of supposing and inventing excuses and reasons. "Arthur has not written, and that covers the whole ground," she said wearily on Monday night as they sat down to dinner. "If he had written, the letter would have been here. I suppose he is sick again."

Soon after dinner was over Dr. Studley came with the delayed letter, but it was not from Lord Fenwick but from a doctor resident near the castle. It was a touching bit of script, and the doctor thought it would be a welcome peacemaker.

"I have a letter from Fenwick," he said as he

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gratefully took a seat within the warmth and glow of the large hearthstone. "Yes, I have a letter from Fenwick."

"Is it from Lord Arthur?" asked the Colonel.

"No. It is from Dr. Moffat, a physician of good reputation. He says Lord Fenwick has been seriously ill but is recovering, and he expects to be able to travel in about a week." Then, he added, "I hope I have not done wrong in bringing the news today."

"Quite right, Doctor! Quite right! Lucia must have her lesson. It seems hard, but it is only the hard lessons that do us any good. We misread the easy ones—or forget them."

"But 'when sorrows are passed, in the end is showed the treasures of immortality,' " answered Dr. Studley.

"I am afraid he is a weak man every way."

"Do you mean Lord Arthur Fenwick, Colonel?"

"I do, Doctor."

"Well, I will admit that it is easier to pardon his faults, than to defend or explain them. But he is really too ill to travel. I am sure of that."

"What is the matter with him?"

"He swooned at the funeral and has not been allowed to take any exercise since."

"It would do him good to be up and about his business. For instance, he ought to be here."

"He knows and feels it," replied Dr. Studley. "I

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suppose Lucia still carries her disappointment bravely?"

"She has borne it wonderfully."

"Lucia is but a child, but she has that something in her which rings well to the smiter and brings the best out of the worst, and bears with what's past cure and puts a good face on it. I feel sure, however, that Fenwick will be here at the end of the week."

"We will say next Monday night, Doctor."

"Yes, next Monday night—or before, Colonel."

"Oh, I say, Doctor, will you see Lucia, and tell her Lord Fenwick is sick again. Upon my honor, I cannot face her with the story. I think she is in the library writing to him."

Lucia was in the library but she was not writing. She sat before the fire, looking intently into its glowing depths. She turned her head as the Doctor entered and said with a smile:

"I am trying to read my fortune in the fire, Doctor. Did you ever try it? Tonight there is one little dark spot that spoils all my pictures. Have you any news from Fenwick Castle, Doctor? I think Arthur has surely forgotten me."

"He has not forgotten you. He loves you most tenderly but he is very sick, too sick to travel."

"Sick! What is the matter? Not fever again, I hope?"

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"No, indeed, the sickness was a simple thing in itself, but roused complications only waiting for such an opportunity. It seems that as he stood at his mother's open grave, the sexton threw upon the coffin the customary spadeful of earth to illustrate —as is the custom—the priest's declaration that the commitment of the body to the grave was only earth to earth and ashes to ashes. And Lord Fenwick was so powerfully affected by the simple rite that he fell down in a swoon and remained unconscious for a serious length of time. I fear there was a slight complication of heart trouble, for he has hardly been allowed to move since. Fenwick loved his mother with a great affection. It is his nature to love with all his heart those whom he loves at all."

"I cannot help thinking there must have been some qualities in Lady Fenwick worthy of such devotion."

"Undoubtedly. Also, it was *the end of all,* and it is finalities that are the tragic element of life—*the end of all!*"

"Now, I will write him a long, loving letter. I was feeling a little hurt at his silence and absence. But you see, Doctor, that was my fault. Love ought never to doubt. I wonder if it had been my funeral, if he would have swooned?"

"He would have died. Indeed I believe he would have died."

"How soon will he be able to come here?"

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"By the end of the week."

"I will write him a long letter. Dear Arthur, it is not his fault. If you will sit with father while I write, you can take the letter with you and mail it many hours before there would be any opportunity to do so from here."

"I will wait for your letter, and see it is in the mail in time for the first train in the morning. And remember, there is nothing seriously wrong. I believe Lord Fenwick will be here on Saturday next."

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CHAPTER XI

LOVE IN IDLENESS

A soul fit for the sunshine, so it followed her; a happy tempered bringer of the best out of the worst, who bears with what is past care, and puts a good face on it.

WE thrive by casualties because life is full of issues and the brave and trusting as soon as one hope goes to ground straightway shape them a new one to the selfsame mark. So before Lord Fenwick was able to reach Abbot's Rest, Lucia had reconsidered and rearranged the marriage that was to take place when the year's mourning was over.

"I will not be married in England," she said to Ann, "and I will not make a feast of it in any shape or way."

"Power of God! But you are right, dearie. I never knew a wedding that set itself to eating and drinking, dancing and folly, that ended well. Marriage is a holy sacrament if you take it as God meant

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it. Anyway it is a human sacrifice, as far as the bride is concerned, and custom may well dress her out in flowers and lace and ribbons. I have read how they dressed the young heifers for the altar in the same way, in pagan days."

"Now, Ann, some marriages are happy. I know that Arthur and I will be happy when we are married."

"Are you always happy now? I have seen you from strike of day till the darkening out with each other; and unless you get the overhand with Arthur Fenwick, there will be many a long hour you will be hard and sharp set to bear him patiently. I know, for men are much of a muchness, and their tempers do try a woman past bearing sometimes. Where are you thinking of being married next year?"

"Perhaps in Rome."

"Never! Never, Lucia Ragnor! In Rome? In a popish church?"

"No, no, Ann! There are Protestant churches in Rome."

"Well, I would not trust any of them, big or little. What are they doing in Rome? And what are you going to wear?"

"Only a plain suit of silver-gray cloth and a hat of the same color. It will be my traveling dress, and we will start at once for Fenwick Castle. I rather dread the place—*she* may be there."

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"Aye, she may, for many a long year. Her wraith would be able to hold its own for a few centuries, I should say."

"Ann, that is impossible."

"Not so. There are many Fenwick wraiths in the Castle yet. When I was there, they were expecting the visit of Lord Bertram Fenwick, who died seven hundred years ago. He was a sinner above many, but he was given a thousand years to undo his crimes, and every century he is summoned and rejudged."

"Did you see him?"

"No, but seven of the Fenwick people did. Lord Arthur was among the number. He was only ten years old, but he described the ghost so exactly to his mother, that she knew whom he had seen and she asked if he was spoken to. And Lord Arthur said, 'He did not speak, but he lifted his hat to me, as he crossed the courtyard, and I bowed to him.' And Foster, the gamekeeper, told it in the servants' hall, that Lord Arthur said he was just like his father, the late lord. But all the Fenwicks are much the same, except Lord Arthur, who is but a shadow of them—he is so much slighter and paler."

"What made you tell me this story, Ann? You never, never named it before."

"I often wanted to tell you, but could not. It was not its hour before."

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"Do you believe the story? I mean about Lord Bertram Fenwick."

"I'll uphold it's true as the Gospels. It gave me such a *feel* when I first heard it that I was fit to drop. The Fenwicks are a very old family and their knights led the bowmen of Rydal and Grassmere at the fields of Crécy and Agincourt. I have been told that all my life, I think."

"Such men in old times were under great temptations to do wrong. We can't judge them, Ann."

"They were bad ones, sure, but no doubt they are sorry enough now for all they did then. Poor waesome ghosts!"

"How long is it since you lived at Fenwick?"

"Twenty years and more, but twenty years is nothing to ghosts. I'll warrant there are some of the first generation of Fenwicks in Fenwick's rooms yet. And I dare say they know each other—dead or alive. Just think of Lord Bertram knowing Lord Arthur was the head of the house, and lifting his hat to him. If he hasn't changed all through, he wouldn't have lifted his hat to any other face of clay. But you need not quail yourself. Nothing will hurt you, flesh or spirit."

"Were you not afraid?"

"No, at first they would start back when I went into a room where they happened to be, but I always said, 'You needn't shy off, you don't startle me, poor

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ghosts, and there's room enough in this old house for both of us.' They got used to me, and I got used to them."

"Would you go back to Fenwick?"

"Yes, if you go. If not, I would rather stop at Abbot's Rest. The old monks walking about with their bent heads are praying, I think, and I'll be bound they have lots of prayers to say yet. I wouldn't hinder them, not I!"

"You are joking with me—or trying to frighten me, Ann. I do not like joking about the dead and you can't frighten me."

"Nay, miss, what I have said is as true as anybody rightly knows. Ask Lord Arthur, and he will tell you far more than I can do. When is he coming again?"

"He has been very ill, but he is coming in a few days."

"And then? Shall we stay at Abbot's Rest or go wandering?"

"Go wandering, I think. You will go wandering with us. I dare say you will like it, Ann."

"I know better, missee. But the Colonel and you would be two babes in the wood without me."

So the days went by and one day was very like the other, but Lucia hardly noticed their monotony. Her mind and hope were fixed on Saturday evening. She trusted Lord Fenwick would be with her by that

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time, and she set her life to that hope. Nothing else mattered. On Friday evening just as they were leaving the dinner table the door was gently opened and Lord Fenwick entered. The Colonel leaped to his feet with an exclamation of welcome, and Lucia took instant comfort in the arms open to receive her. Then there was an impromptu dinner to arrange, and the younger man flushed and beamed in the loving welcome of his reception. That he had been ill and that he had suffered much was evident without any explanation. His air of lofty lineage, his pale and subtle smile, his words of satisfied happiness did not hide that graving of physical pain which peer and peasant must alike submit to. But whatever his experience had been, it had worked worthily, for it had imparted to the pale features an air of patient serenity that no one had ever before seen on them. To Lucia he appeared handsomer than ever; to the Colonel he was a changed man—more gracious and more lovable.

"I heard he wasn't himself for two days. Neither *here* nor *there*, you know," said Ann to Lucia in a confidential talk that night, "but wherever he was, Someone greater than himself talked with him, and he came back to life with the lesson well learned—even Dick Idle says that."

"Dick Idle, who is he?"

"I think you have guessed, missee. Dick is my

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husband. I have hardly spoken to him for more than twenty years, but he said last night I was his first and only love! Men are that hard to get rid of, and I can't turn him out, as is my usual way, for he is the only man Lord Fenwick will have near him and the only one that understands what Lord Fenwick wants and must have."

"What are you going to do, Ann?"

"Bear with him for everybody's sake. He says they will not be long here."

"Why not?"

"Because them that's dead and gone have got everything that was right wrong, and everything that was straight crooked. Dick says the steward is in jail and the lawyer under heavy bonds. Dick thinks Lord Fenwick will be a poor man for a long time."

"How do you feel, Ann, about being in the same house with Dick?"

"Well, miss, it isn't my wishing or seeking and I must put up with it."

"If Lord Fenwick travels with us, I hope Dick will not be with the party. I do not like Dick."

"It isn't likely Fenwick will travel with us long or far. He has too much trouble in hand to be away from his home where the main trouble lies, and poor Dick isn't so bad now. He has got a change, too. He has been going to the Methodists lately and he

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says they are helping him to be good. I don't like to discourage him. It wouldn't be right now, would it?"

"I suppose it would not—but——"

"Well, miss, we must all do the duty laid on us—pleasant and unpleasant, and duties are mostly unpleasant. I've noticed that all my life."

Lord Fenwick remained nearly three weeks at Abbot's Rest, and during that time really rejuvenated himself under the Colonel's and Dr. Studley's care. He walked over the fells with them breathing air that was brimful of life. He went riding with the Colonel, he went driving with Studley. He spent delightful evenings at Abbot's Rest, where a few gentlemen gathered to dine with him and he heard all their political views with the greatest interest, for politics was the most fascinating of all subjects to him, and he had promised his party several things which he knew he must get at the heart of the people to be instructed in. So politics was the theme of every night's discussion and the men were hot and eager till near midnight over them. Sometimes Lucia sat with a piece of sewing or a book in her hand listening, but before nine o'clock the gentlemen were left to that absolute freedom of speech which politics seems to require.

Ann grumbled about the wastrie of fire and light, and the weariness of watching midnight, but "What

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can be done?" she asked hopelessly. "By the time they have given the Queen and Prince Albert, the Privy Council and the two Houses of Parliament all they deserve, there is not a man in the parlor fit to draw the bolts on the doors or cover the backlogs on the hearth safely."

"O Ann, do you mean they have been drinking too much wine?"

"Well, miss, when men are argufying and even quarreling—politely—and good wine is standing within hand's reach, what can you expect? They may not get what is called 'the worse of liquor,' but I'll swear after four hours' talking and drinking they are not the better of it."

"I never knew father to——"

"Oh, the Colonel is different! He got his training in India—a little goes a long way with Colonel Ragnor. Squire Loder will drink a bottle to the Colonel's glass."

"How can men do such things?"

"If men are talking politics, they can do and say anything."

"Lord Fenwick says very little."

"That's right. His trade is to say little, or if he does say anything, not to mean it or to make it understandable. At least Dixon says he is a diplomat, and that is how he described their business to me. He goes to France and Russia and all other coun-

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tries and talks for England, but he does not let anyone of them know what England means."

"It takes a clever man to do that, Ann. I am very proud of Arthur talking for England."

"It's nearly as good as fighting for England, miss, I suppose. But it wouldn't do when Frenchmen or Russians or anybody else gets unreasonable and won't do as they are politely requested. Where is your diplomat then? A few regiments with good colonels at the head of them is the only conversation that is of any use at all."

So they talked in the dining-room and so they talked in Miss Lucia's room and in the kitchen they sifted both sides and were as far from knowledge as the rest of the disputants. But after all there is something fatiguing in a life making constant demands on the mind or the body. The Colonel began to complain to his daughter of weariness; there was less company in the evenings during the third week of this life of excitement, and Lord Fenwick began to talk uneasily of the suits which he ought to be preparing to prosecute. Moore says, "Love fell asleep in a sameness of splendor," in fact love is apt to grow at least bored or indifferent in any kind of monotony, and perhaps a monotony of pleasure-seeking is more fatal to love than the sameness of daily life and occupation. For it is rarely indeed that pleasure-seekers are pleasure-finders.

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It was even in the beginning of the third week that Lucia said to Ann, "I have had a pleasanter evening than usual, Ann, and I do not feel cross and tired tonight. Yet we were talking of various plans for the winter, any of which would cause much separation between Arthur and myself. And I thought three weeks ago that I never, never could get enough of Arthur's company. What is the meaning of this change of feeling, Ann?"

"You have had enough of each other for the present time, that is what it means. When you have had enough of ice cream, you don't want any more. You wouldn't care if no one ever said ice cream to you again; the thought of it bores you; you are glad to be out of the sight of it. Love isn't much different. Kisses get cold and cloying, sweet words silly and irritating. When Dick was courting me, he used to call me 'Darling,' 'Honey,' and all kinds of loving names, and I got so sick of them I relished the first cross word he gave me. I could give him that kind back, easy tit-for-tat."

"Do you think then Lord Arthur is tired of me?"

"I wouldn't wonder if he was."

"O Ann, what makes you think so?"

"Well, you know yourself he hates the cold weather, but he goes out walking and riding when he could sit by the warm hearthstone, and have you cuddle up to him and to whisper to him. Love is

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everything in the world to a woman; it is an accident or an incident at best to a man. Why-a! Any of them will put a game of whist or a quarrel about politics before a bit of courting. I don't blame them —I would myself."

"You see Arthur is so anxious to build up his health. Dr. Studley is always talking to him about it, always urging him into the fine air on the fells. I do not like this in the Doctor. He is selfish, and wants to have Arthur's company. That is how Arthur is so much out of my company."

"I dare say that is as good a reason as any. When is he going back to Fenwick?"

"Next Friday. He has to press his suits. I told you about them."

"Yes, you told me."

"Wasn't it a shame for his steward and gamekeeper to rob the estate so much and for so long? Arthur says the stealing has been going on for eight years and will amount to many thousands of pounds. But Arthur will put a stop to it."

"If he can—maybe."

"The law will help him."

"To get his money back?"

"No, I suppose that is gone. No trace can be found of it."

Ann laughed softly and answered, "It is in the main Lord Fenwick's own fault. Anybody could see

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'thief' written all over Sam Laycock's face. Why, nature has set his eyes crooked as if to warn men and women that he couldn't see what was his own and what belonged to other folk. As for Jack Lander, he had too much money to handle. That smart little body that brought you Lady Fenwick's letter told me the game that went up to Covent Garden was amazing and that Jack collected all the proceeds."

"And now Jack knows nothing about the proceeds."

"I'll be bound he knows nothing about them."

"Oh, but Lord Fenwick says Jack knows very well where the money is—but he won't tell."

"Of course he won't tell. He will never tell. Jack is a Border man. He knows better than to give himself away."

"Is that better, Ann?"

"Yes—for Jack, it is a good deal better."

"How you love a Borderer, Ann!"

"Why not? I'm a Border lass myself. If they have a fault, it is lifting money or sheep or any little thing that comes their way. But they are not to blame for that, for the government laughed at them and even praised them for it, and poets made songs about the Armstrongs and Netherbys and wrote stories about the liftings and how the young men liked well to ride on a moonlight night. Even when

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I was a girl the old men would say sadly, 'The night is the night if the lads were the lads.' The Border men are honest and true, save a little lifting and shifting for their living, God help them, and Jack has five hundred years of Border blood. How can the lad always keep his fingers in his own pocket? You could remind Lord Fenwick of this fact, for the Landers rode with the Fenwicks, and the money might help poor li'l' Jack."

"'Li'l'—do you mean that he is a very small man?"

"I mean he is li'l-hearted, true and tender, gentle and good. Jack *little!* He is the biggest, handsomest, gayest lad in Northumberland; the cleanest shot, the best fiddler on this side of Tweed, and as for singing, they say he can wile a bird off the tree with his own voice. I have heard anyway that he is dearly loved by gentry and simple, and Lord Fenwick will not be thanked by the country if he is hard with Jack Lander."

"Lord Fenwick will do what is right, Ann. It is right to stand by the law, and if the man has broken the law, he ought to suffer."

"Oh, but youth is a hard and bitter judge. Old England in her merciful heart considers that and only appoints graybeards as judges. She knows well that youth would hang every offender. I will remember in saying my prayers this night to be spe-

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cially thankful that the Judge of my life and my soul is '*The Ancient of Days.*' "

"Now you are cross, Ann, because I will not promise to speak for Jack Lander."

"You need not speak. All the men of Humber Land will speak for him; and Lord Fenwick wants their votes some day and your lord is too wise a man to forget that. Good night, missee!"

"Are you offended, Ann?"

"No, missee. Whatever will be, will be. And you could neither hinder nor help it."

So the last few days went swiftly away, and on Saturday night Abbot's Rest had a dark and desolate look. All but Ann and Dixon had gone away to their several homes, and Ann would follow the Colonel and Lucia to London within a week or two. Both the Colonel and Lucia were glad of the change. The Colonel was weary of his position as host. He had felt its restraints and promised himself satisfaction when Lothian and Pearson and others were not his guests. While they were his guests he was under the law of bread and salt and did not feel that as a gentleman he could say all that he wished to say.

Lucia, too, had been under a constant and present restraint. The wedding-ring had passed between them and Lord Fenwick was delighted to hear that Dr. Studley had placed it on her finger. In a way he felt the proud, shy little maiden to be all his own.

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He noticed that she was as dignified with all her old admirers as if she was in reality his wife; and involuntarily and unconsciously to himself he assumed something of the indifferent air of a married man. Everyone noticed it; Lucia could not fail to do so, and his small presumptions and inattentions angered her, especially if anyone was present, which was usually the case. To her own heart she had raged a little about it; to Ann she had said with an air of mortification:

"He thinks he is sure of me and is as rude as if I was really his wife. Let him look out. 'There is many a slip between the cup and the lip.' "

"Well, missee," was the answer, "before you really run in double harness, look well to the other horse. There is no need for you to be in a hurry; you have nearly a year to consider your ways and be wise—"

"It is said, Ann, that by marriage two are made one. There are many little things in which I could not be one with Arthur."

"It is a loose-at-ends saying, to assert that by marriage two people are made one; the *great point* is *which one.* Will Lord Fenwick become you, or will you be merged in Lord Fenwick?"

"I shall always remain myself. I will be merged in no one, and I will allow no one to be merged in me."

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"Well, well, it isn't every couple that is either one or a pair. There's Ann Idle, for instance."

"I have thought Dick Idle and you very friendly the last week or two. I was sure you had forgiven him."

"Not I! I am none of the forgiving sort. But we could not speak our minds in the Colonel's house. My opinions of Dick are over twenty years old; they will keep a little longer easy."

"I dare say they will. Ann, how long will it take you to put the house so that it can be safely left?"

"About a week or ten days."

"Then you will hurry up to London. I shall be impatient for you."

"Why?"

"I want to get out of London and see what other parts of the world are like."

"The world is all made of land and water. One river is like another river and one mountain like another mountain; yes, and taking it broad and long, one big city is very like any other big city."

"I mean the people of the world, Ann. I am tired of rivers and mountains. I want to see men and women."

"You will find them much of a muchness. Some are prettier than others to look at—better dressed or better taught—but everywhere, and anyhow, nothing will prevent them acting after their kind."

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"How?"

"A man will act like a man and a woman like a woman. An Englishman will act like an Englishman and a Frenchman like a Frenchman, and you must take them as you meet them. Now, you know something of an Englishman, stick to what you can fathom."

"I shall stick to Lord Fenwick, of course."

"Of course."

"How uncomfortable all is now! I wish it was Saturday morning."

"Does Lord Fenwick go with you?"

"We go to the station together. He will take the northern train ten minutes before we take the London express."

"I did not know exactly."

"I think every chair and table in the house knows. Nothing has been moved out of its place, yet there is the most positive air of change and desertion. I looked into the library as I passed it this afternoon and a book was lying open on the table. It had a look of being done with, and I lifted it gently and put it in its place; then without intending it, I looked round the room as if saying good-bye to it."

"Aye, it's queer what airs a house can put on. You wouldn't think bits of wood and satin would look so lonely as I have seen them look, and the hearthstone and the brass things belonging to it showing plainly

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they could speak their mind if we could only understand them. I have knelt down in my bonnet and cloak and lit a few sticks of wood just to comfort them a bit till I could manage to get a good coal fire on. Yes, I have, and you needn't laugh at me. Folks miss a good deal that can't hear and feel the dumb life about them."

"I don't think it is dumb, Ann. How the trees sigh and moan and complain before a storm! And how they whisper to the birds that build in their green palaces! If you strike a stone, it cries out; and a piece of brass, what a noise it makes! Dr. Studley told me everything had a voice that its Maker understood, and then he made me read aloud to him the first six verses of the nineteenth psalm."

"Well, Dr. Studley knows a good deal, but there are shepherds on the fells, just common folk, that know more about common things than he does, missee."

During these few last days there were frequent visitings between Lucia and Ann. Lord Fenwick heard them laughing and talking and at last had a little spasm of jealousy. Why was Lucia not talking to him? His thoughts began to trouble him a little. He remembered that she had gone off with Lucy Pearson often lately and left him alone. As for Ann, he was really angry with Ann. She was always wanting Miss Ragnor, and Miss Ragnor had lately always

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been willing to go to Ann, remaining with her often far longer than he thought any household question could require attention. Consequently she was putting Ann before him. How could that be? He thought it over, and actually came to a correct diagnosis of the condition.

"I have not been quite as attentive to all her whims as she expected—I thought she understood how perfect my love for her was. I don't believe she has ever been the same since my poor mother died; she has not forgiven our delayed marriage—I have never been able to persuade her I could not avoid it by any means — she always smiles sarcastically and says, 'Love could have found a way.' What did she mean? I recollect Lothian asking me why I did not marry her as soon as I received the letter about my mother's serious condition. How could I do such a thing? Mother might have been dead at that very moment—Perhaps she is getting tired of me! I have not been as bright as usual, but she ought to remember I have had two severe sicknesses since I first knew her. But I will now be very attentive. There are only two days left, and I dare say it will do her good to miss me for a few weeks—she may go all over Europe, and not find another lover to put in the place of Arthur Fenwick, Lord of Fenwick and De Montane. And he rose and straightened himself and ran his hand through his still beautiful hair and felt satis-

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fied. Lucia loved him, and he was too noble and too rich a lover to be lightly cast off.

But he did not take into account the youth of his promised bride, nor yet the progressive ideas women had been greedily assimilating the last ten years. To these ideas he had not given the slightest attention. And he certainly considered them quite outside the horizon of a girl of Lucia's social standing and patrician expectations. He kept the promise, however, that he had made to himself and spent the last two days of his visit in wooing Lucia with all the fervor of his first infatuation. So their parting was full of love and hope, and passionate promises of an early meeting wherever Lucia should appoint it.

At the time of their parting, nothing definite as to their plan of travel had been arrived at. They were going to London to the Savoy Hotel and from that point of advantage would decide on their future movements. The Colonel's methodical temper did not approve this undecided trip, but to Lucia it appeared to be the delightful element of the whole project. "Today we are going to London," she said joyously, "and tomorrow will grow out of today. And if you are going to travel for pleasure, you do not talk it away and make the journey stale before you begin it."

So they went to the Savoy with the understanding that they would remain there until Ann joined them.

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So far, it pleased the Colonel who always declared he could find his world in London. He was a member of The Rag, the famous club of the Army, and he spent his first day in London among the old friends he found there. Lucia was, she said, very tired and she resolved to stay in her room and consider her wardrobe. "I dare say it is a mass of crushes and creases," she said to her father; and he asked, as a mere matter of form, "Who packed your trunks, Lucia?" "Why, Ann packed them, of course," she answered, and the Colonel smiled and said confidently, "Then there will not be a crush or crease in the whole five trunks, I am sure."

"Six trunks, father. Please keep the proper number in your mind or I may lose one of them."

A very slight investigation proved to Lucia that her father's opinion of Ann's packing was a correct one, and she re-locked the six trunks, put her front hair in crimps, wrote a long letter to Lord Fenwick, and then loosely and comfortably gowned, lay down on the sofa to think. The first pressing emergency would be her toilet for the restaurant dinner. She knew her father would seriously object to having his dinner in public. "He will want it laid in the parlor, of course, and I might just as well be at Abbot's Rest. I wonder how I am to manage father!"

She made two or three plans with this object in view and was dissatisfied and uncertain, but she ar-

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rayed herself splendidly and then waited the hour with that kind of confidence which general good fortune inspires. And as usual Destiny was kind to her. She was going down the corridor between the parlor and her dressing-room, when she heard a familiar voice call in an excited manner:

"*Lucia! Lucia Ragnor!*"

Turning quickly she saw a lady hurrying towards her, and the next moment she knew it was Mrs. St. Clair. They kissed each other and then asked at the same time, "When did you come here?" and answered exactly together, "This morning, only this morning."

"And Mr. St. Clair?"

"He is here with me and quite well. How is Colonel Ragnor?"

"Quite well. He is in London somewhere, I suppose at The Rag. I think he lives there when he is not with me."

"Naturally, being an army man. How is Lord Fenwick?"

"He has been ill since the death of his mother, but is now better."

"Is he with you?"

"No."

"When were you married? I never heard 'word nor wittens' of the affair, never even got an invitation nor yet cake or card."

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"I am not married. And my last letter from you was dated Quebec."

"No, New York. I wrote from New York."

"That letter has not arrived yet."

"And you are not married yet?"

"No. The day before the one set for our marriage, Lady Fenwick died."

"Oh! Oh! How unfortunate! You must tell me all about it."

"Yes, certainly, but not here. Come to my room after dinner."

"You have not asked after Geoffrey yet?"

"I hope he is well and happy."

"Why, here he comes to answer for himself!" and Lucia, involuntarily turning at the unexpected information, found him almost at her side. They looked with great interest at each other. Geoffrey wondered how to address her. Was she still Miss Ragnor, or would he have to call her Lady Fenwick? An instant of repugnance followed, and then Mrs. St. Clair said hurriedly:

"Lucia is staying here, Geoffrey, and you must help me to give her a really pleasant time. The Colonel isn't to be depended on when he is anywhere near The Rag. Where is he now, Lucia?"

Lucia laughingly answered, "At The Rag, I suppose. But he promised to be home at seven for dinner."

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"It is now at least half-past seven. Come down with me."

"Perhaps he has arrived while I have been chattering to you. Let us go and see."

It was but a few steps and they found the Colonel rather impatiently waiting for his daughter. Then this thing happened—Geoffrey went for his uncle and the united friends dined together. And after dinner Geoffrey took the ladies to the opera, and Mr. St. Clair and Colonel Ragnor smoked and talked the evening away.

At first there was a certain constraint between Lucia and Geoffrey. They had both changed very much in appearance. Geoffrey was greatly improved. He had been traveling for some months with his uncle and aunt, and had acquired all of that fine polish travel imparts to fine natures. He was more subdued in manner, yet the sense of power that pervaded his every movement was actually increased. It was a pleasure to walk at his side, the bending of his large head, the touch of his strong hand, the sense of soul and life in his voice, were all that women ardently desire. They expressed safety, comfort, even affectionate watchfulness; any woman, however naturally timid, would have walked through a mob and felt secure at his side. For the Inner Man had been busy making himself a noble fleshly vesture and Lucia wondered and admired.

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So Ann was not as eagerly welcomed as she expected to be, and her keen senses took in the situation at once. She said to herself that there was danger in it and she asked Lucia if she did not think so. Lucia denied this suggestion with some temper. But after a few days' observation Ann made a remark to the Colonel of the same character; and he was more alive to the possible results of so close a daily companionship. He made no positive answer to the insinuation, but sat down to take another smoke and think over the route of travel most likely not to attract the St. Clair party.

"There is Russia," he said to himself. "The St. Clairs have been in Russia as late as last May and June; they could not want to go there again now—or at any other time. I will propose Russia to Lucia. I think she will like the idea;" and Lucia entering the parlor at the very moment he made this decision, he plunged into the subject with the air of one who is sure he is going to give a delightful surprise.

Lucia stood still in her advance to listen, and when the offer with all its blandishments had been explained, she looked at the Colonel with astonishment.

"Why, father, what an idea!" And she laughed as she continued, "Go to Russia in midwinter. Who ever heard of anything so preposterous? If we reached St. Petersburg alive or with all our toes and fingers and our noses and ears unfrozen, you would

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be helpless with rheumatism. You know Dr. Studley said Abbot's Rest was far too cold for you; St. Petersburg is much colder."

"To be sure," he admitted, "I had forgotten the climate; St. Petersburg must be put off until summer. Where would you like to go, Lucia? This journey is for your pleasure. We will let you choose the road to that end."

"Thank you, father," and she sat down beside him, and clasped his long brown hand in hers. "I will ask Mrs. St. Clair," she continued. "The St. Clairs have been everywhere, I think. She said yesterday she could go nowhere fresh, unless it was to Dalmatia or Portugal. I never heard of anyone going to Portugal, did you, father?"

"No," he answered dubiously.

"Nor Dalmatia either, father?"

"I don't know anything about Dalmatia. But we want a change and you want to see the world. Mrs. St. Clair might give you some good advice today. By the bye, don't you think we had better separate from the St. Clairs?"

"Oh, father, they are so kind and so delightful. Why should we part?"

"When is Arthur coming?"

"He asked me in his last letter where we expected to be about the middle of March."

"Do you not understand that Arthur might be an-

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noyed if not offended by your very constant companionship with Geoffrey Gardiner?"

"You mean——"

"I mean he might be jealous. I should be fighting jealous if in his place."

Lucia laughed merrily. "You dear, old-fashioned man," she said. "Of course, you would, but lovers do not fight duels these days. Arthur has the most perfect confidence in me."

"Then you ought to deserve it."

"So I do. I tell Arthur everything. He knows exactly whom I go to plays and operas with. I tell him about our shopping, riding, and walking. He is quite satisfied."

"And you—do not consider yourself in danger?"

"In what danger, pray?"

"Of falling in love with Geoffrey. I consider him a very great temptation to any girl."

"I am Lucia Ragnor, and not 'any girl.' I am astonished that you should think of me so unworthily. Arthur does not wrong me in such ways. He trusts me and I tell him wherever I go with Geoffrey. He is not jealous of me. Good for him that he is not, for if he was, I would see that he had reasons enough for the detestable passion. I am going with Geoffrey and Mrs. St. Clair to lunch at the Star and Garter Inn today, and when I return here I shall write Arthur and tell him all that happened. I may

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even tell him our conversation. He would smile at it, I am sure."

Then the Colonel threw away his cigar and said he was going to his club. There was a slight touch of offence in their adieus. And Lucia went to Mrs. St. Clair and made a complaint against old people in general and her father in particular. The Colonel was not happy. He thought Lucia's excessive confidence suspicious, and her ready offence still more so. "We had better get away from the St. Clairs as soon as possible," he thought, and he resolved that day to talk to some of his old friends about a nice, quiet place to pass a few weeks in.

It was a new friend, however, that gave him the information he wanted, a military man whose acquaintance he had recently made. "I am looking for a place in which to spend a few weeks pleasantly," he said, "and I wonder if you can tell me where to find it. I do not want to go too far away."

"You need not go far to find an earthly paradise."

"How far?"

"Seventy miles from Liverpool—a short sail to a little island in the Irish Sea."

"You mean the Isle of Man?"

"Yes, one of the loveliest spots on earth. Just the place for you. No rheumatism there. Finest climate in the world for an Englishman—highest temperature in July and August 58.7 degrees, lowest temper-

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ature in November and December 45.2 degrees—reason for this favorable condition the island's shores are nursed in the bosom of the warm Gulf Stream which flows from Mexico into the Irish Channel. You can't live and breathe there even for a week without feeling a marked invigoration and a wonderful flow of fine spirits. You don't know how to get up your English blues in its glorious sunshine and warmth. Go up to Castletown. You won't want to leave it in a hurry. I run over there for a few days every month. My wife makes me. She says I wouldn't be fit to live with if I didn't."

"Thank you, Aubrey. What kind of people live there?"

"The natives are as fine a race of fishers as you could find out of Fife and Shetland; the settlers are the picked men and women of the English people."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say; there are in Castletown mostly retired naval and military officers, and there is a regiment always in Castletown barracks because that town is the seat of government. You see the island has its own House of Parliament and its Governor. These picturesque elements will be altered soon. You had better go to the island while it is a romance. Miss Ragnor will find folk lore, and fairy lore in the hearts of all the Manx people. It is a wonderful resting place."

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"Thank you, Aubrey! I will try it. As I go back to my hotel I will buy some books about the place and Lucia shall read them to me."

He bought the books as he went back to the Savoy, but he found Lucia in full dress for the opera, and she made a little mouth and shook her head at the proposal that she should read to the Colonel. She was, however, displeased with herself and during an interlude in the performance said to Mrs. St. Clair:

"I am unhappy. My father's patient look of disappointment haunts me. I cannot bear to remember it."

"You can make it up to him. If he wants to go to the Isle of Man go with him without coaxing or pouting. I have heard that life is loveable and liveable there when it isn't bearable in the rest of England. And you could not escape the opera tonight. It is a special performance and Geoffrey had succeeded in getting specially good seats. Don't worry. You can put all right with the Colonel by a kiss and a smile and a promise to go where he wishes to go."

"No, I cannot. I know he has been unhappy tonight, and tomorrow I cannot undo tonight."

The morning was fortunately very wet, just rain interrupted by more rain, and the Manx books were welcome. Lucia read them aloud, and the St. Clairs coming in heard sufficient to give them a desire to visit the right little, tight little island.

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In twenty-four hours there was an enthusiastic preparation for Douglas, the Manx steamboat port, and Lucia was quite happy in the prospect they offered. The only person pretending anything but pleasure was Ann. She had expected to go to France, Italy, Germany, and every other corner of the continent worth seeing; to go from the British Isles to a still smaller island did not equal her expectations. She disparaged the whole event so decidedly in her looks and movements that Lucia asked:

"Do you want to go to Manxland, Ann?"

"I do not, not at all, miss."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No, miss, but I have known several very respectable men and women who had been taken there—unwillingly like—by the people they lived with. The place itself is good enough, for God made it like as if it was a garden, and you cannot get out of the sight of the sea, go where you will. I am thinking many an English nobleman's estate is as large as the whole island, perhaps Fenwick itself is, taking in bog and heather, land and water, meadow and mountain—but—but—" and then a heavy sigh.

"But what, Ann?"

"You may praise the place as much as you like and I'll gainsay nothing against your opinion, but the people who live there!——"

"What is the matter with the people, Ann?"

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"The natives are good enough—silent, industrious, God-fearing fishers—it's the quality people I object to—three-fourths of them are only half-pay naval and army officers and the like o' them."

"My father is on half pay, Ann. An officer of the army or navy is a gentleman. You must not speak of gentlemen and ladies in such a disrespectful way."

"Colonel Ragnor, thank God, has an estate at his back, and money behind that. Colonel Ragnor's half pay is neither here nor there, and what I am wanting to say is—well, the ladies won't dress up to your mark, and won't be fit company for you who are used to tip-on-top society."

"Do not take any care on that subject, Ann. Mrs. St. Clair and I are going to buy tweed suits, and spend most of our time in open boats on the sea. There is splendid line fishing for ladies there."

"Excuse me, miss, are the St. Clairs to go with us?"

"Certainly."

"I'm very sorry!"

"*Ann!*"

"Yes, I am! It isn't fair to Lord Fenwick."

"What isn't fair?"

"That big, red-haired Scot dangling after you from early to late; threading your needle when you sew, carrying your parasol when you walk, at your

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beck and call for opera, theater, ride, and drive, and what not. If Lord Fenwick knew it——"

"He knows all about it. I tell him everything."

"Then why is he not here?"

"He is busy looking after his acres and his money and prosecuting two thievish servants. I hear the steward is going overseas to hard labor."

"And Jack Lander?"

"The gamekeeper? He goes to Dartmouth for two years and hard labor."

"Poor Jack! That sentence will cost Fenwick every vote in Fenwick town."

"Justice must be maintained, Ann."

"It is a great comfort that we are taught to pray for forgiveness and mercy. I wouldn't pray at all if I had been told to pray for justice—not I! Not a word!" and she emphasized her opinion, with a positive shake of her head.

"Well, Ann, I would rather talk of our short trip to Manxland. I feel sure we are going to have a delightful time."

In a large measure this faith was abundantly realized. Life in Castletown was so simple yet so varied, so intimate and yet so safe-guarded, by the recognized restraints from that familiarity which breeds contempt that good-nature was never imposed upon. Colonel Ragnor was immediately free of the officer's mess, and Lucia was the belle and beauty of the

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pretty, informal dances that took place so frequently either at the Government House or at the private dwellings of the officers, or of some of the wealthy inhabitants. Even the professors of King William's College had their charming evenings and scientific and literary séances.

To these joyous, refined pleasure parties Lucia went very simply dressed. She had not only the social intelligence which warned her from overdressing as intensely vulgar, but also the kindly nature which led her to strictly avoid whatever appeared to savor of a pretentious superiority. Yet, never had she looked lovelier than she did in the clear white book-muslin and colored sashes then worn. The long, plain, filmy skirt, the white satin sandals, and long white gloves, and the beautifully dressed hair were exquisite adjuncts to her natural beauty and fresh, youthful, glow and spirit. Her jewel-case was not opened, the scarlet bell of gorgeous fuchsias growing so profusely all around her were far more exquisite in her dark hair than the glint of diamonds, and the white rose nestling at her throat far more bewitching than a rope of Indian pearls.

Towards the end of March Lucia received a letter from Lord Fenwick saying he would leave Liverpool for Manxland on the following Wednesday and he supposed he had better remain in Douglas for a

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night as the place and its ways were quite unknown to him.

"I think, father," she said after reading the words aloud, "I think you ought to drive down to Douglas and bring Arthur home at once."

The Colonel looked perplexed at this proposition, and after a glance at Geoffrey who was waiting his aunt's arrival in the room, he said, "Geoffrey, I have promised Gale Quiggin to sail with him to the Calf of Man today. I cannot disappoint him—and myself. I wonder if you would go and meet *King Orry*. If she has a good wind she will be at her dock at four o'clock."

"Certainly. I will go, Colonel."

"You know him I believe, Geoffrey."

"I have been introduced to him."

"I will go with Geoffrey, father. I wish to do that, and Geoffrey is a fine driver."

Geoffrey looked at her and bowed his head in assent. The glow of his admiration was on his face, but there was no other sign of it, and even Lucia did not suspect how well he understood and admired the pluck and wisdom which had at once seized the point to be guarded.

So the Colonel went happily away with Gale Quiggin, and in the afternoon Lucia and Geoffrey Gardiner drove to Douglas pier, where the steamer had just arrived. Lord Fenwick was standing at the gun-

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wale and he saw Lucia and her companion the moment it was possible to do so. Then his eyes conquered space and told her in one bright flash how he loved her. He was looking remarkably handsome, and met Lucia—and Geoffrey also—with all the friendly abandonment to feeling that the situation expected and called for.

He had no unpleasant memory of Geoffrey; he had never regarded him as a serious rival. Indeed, his remembrance of the young man was of the slightest character. But if he had possessed a full knowledge of Geoffrey's passionate affection for Lucia, such knowledge would not have given him any anxiety. He was far too proud a man to be jealous of any other man and far too appreciative of his position and his personality to fear that any woman he loved and designed to honor with his hand and name, could possibly descend to a lover on a social and personal plane far beneath that on which he was an acknowledged leader.

So he was more than usually pleasant to Geoffrey. He could not blame him for loving Lucia, he saw her constantly in the St. Clair home, and if he had been insensible to her many charms, he must have considered him a creature without heart or intellect. A large majority of men are greatly influenced concerning the woman they love by the admiration of other men for her, and that they should be envied

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or even disliked by them because of their success with the Fair One is a secret but potent element in their own love and pleasure. And there was a good deal of this ignoble feeling in Lord Fenwick's heart with regard to Geoffrey.

Fortunately, Geoffrey did not suspect its existence, and on this apparently poor foundation there was built up a very real and worthy friendship. In fact, the men "took to each other" in a very singular degree, and certainly on Lord Fenwick's part it was a genuine liking, though most of the officers in garrison could not understand "what his lordship saw in that big, brawny man who had made his fortune by some lucky coup in Turkish business securities." They considered it in their smoking counsels as "most extraordinary." The Colonel had been told of these discussions, but had no special opinion to give. He only wondered that the most of these youngsters had not noticed how readily the weak physique clings to the strong, how the fearful heart loves the hopeful heart and the cowardly soul the company of the brave. And in this solution of the question it may not be noticed that Lord Fenwick, in spite of his very handsome physique, was essentially a weak man as regarded bodily strength and endurance. So he admired Geoffrey's skill and mastery in the boats. He envied his ability to walk twenty miles and not be weary and his unflagging spirits after a day's hard

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rowing and fishing, followed by a night of eight hours' dancing and talking.

Also he felt himself to be in every sense uplifted in Geoffrey's presence. He made him content with the past and hopeful for the future. He found himself laughing often and very heartily in Geoffrey's society and he could spend a whole day with Geoffrey and never feel cross or say disagreeable things about any of the young cads in the barracks. Admitting and praising all these evident good qualities one day to the Colonel, Lucia's betrothed added, "And you must have seen, sir, how controlling his whole manner is, how straightforward, earnest, headlong, almost willful his purposes and ways. I am glad he is not in love with Lucia. I have never feared a rival, but I might fear Geoffrey Gardiner if I was inclined to do Lucia such a wrong."

"You need not fear anyone, Arthur," was the answer. "Lucia loves you with all her heart. She prefers both your person and your qualities. You suit her exactly."

Indeed it appeared to be so. Until the summer days were far spent, the sunny ideal life which their surroundings indicated continued. It was an interlude in Paradise to which everything around conduced. Even the climate and the charming landscapes on every hand contributed their share—mountain and valley and babbling streams, and the songs

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of multitudes of birds and the perfume and glory of flowers and, above all, the ever-present sight of the sea and scent of the sea and voice of the sea—all these things were a positive part of their love life and perpetually served love's sweet intents. Gradually all felt the influx of perfect health and rejoiced in it. Such an existence even for a few months was hiving honey for every day of life after it.

The first note of change came in August. The St. Clairs went to the moors in Sutherland for that month and September, and had no clear intent as to their future movements. But they wrote to Geoffrey such splendid accounts of the game and the shooting that both Geoffrey and Lord Fenwick became restless and in ten days joined them. The Ragnors were then alone, and the Colonel began to talk with his daughter of the south of Europe for the winter months.

But while everything was undecided and Lucia was really enjoying the happy lethargy of a heart a little weary of love and happiness, a letter came from Dr. Studley that canceled all plans under consideration. He said that some sore distemper was killing the sheep on all the fells in great numbers and that the flocks belonging to Abbot's Rest had suffered most severely. This letter disturbed the Colonel very much. A great deal of his wealth was in the splendid flocks that covered the bleak pastures of his mountainous

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acres. He told Lucia that he ought to go home at once, and she was not unwilling. The thought of the large, still rooms and the quiet luxury of Abbot's Rest was strangely pleasant to her. She wondered at it and expressed her wonder to Ann, who was packing the trunks for the journey.

"I have been so happy here, Ann, so happy! And yet I am not sorry to go away. How is that?"

"Your company has gone, miss, and your heart follows after them. And then this weary sea with its never-ending whispering and moaning — it would weary the saints in heaven, and God knows it, for there's no sea *there*, I'm thankful to say."

"There was such a delightful letter from Arthur this morning. He has found a dear friend of his in Sutherland and he says he is on the moors all day long."

"With a gun, of course. Is he anything of a good shot?"

"A very good shot."

"Some men are grand at the shooting, but no good at the killing—too scattering like."

"Well, we had a happy summer—the happiest summer in all my life."

"I'm sure I am very glad, miss. I wish I could say the same."

"Why, Ann, you have had Dick with you most of the time. I thought you were enjoying his society.

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You went walking with him to Scarlet Rocks every evening, and Lord Fenwick saw you, sitting on the grass at Dick's side, and he was holding your hand and talking to you most lover-like—so Lord Fenwick said."

"If Lord Fenwick would consider my love affairs beneath his notice it would be only proper. I had my own reasons for walking with my husband. I didn't want the women around me to think I had not been able to get a husband and keep him, too. Dick's as handsome as can be and I was rather proud of his looks, and since he became a Methodist he seems very sorry for all his past faults. We have to forgive or else we won't be forgiven; leastways, that is what my Book of Common Prayer says, and I do suppose the Book knows what it is saying."

"Did Dick go to the highlands with his master or is he left at Fenwick?"

"His master would not go without him. Dick knows him as well as if he lived inside of him. In sickness or health he knows what is to be done, and in every kind of temper Dick understands the situation."

Lucia did not answer. She felt offended at Ann's tone and manner, and she recalled with a little shock that she had been hurt frequently by Ann during the past weeks in the same manner. The woman had been hard to please and frequently put on an air of

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injury that Lucia could not understand. She was changed in many respects. She talked about her wasted life, and so evidently blamed the Ragnors in her heart for her alienation from her husband that one day Lucia could not help a feeling of wrong and offence.

"One would think you regretted the years you spent with us, Ann," she said, with a touch of wounded feeling, and Ann answered:

"Maybe I have reason to be angry at myself — perhaps at others. Someway, I have wronged my husband badly. I never knew till lately Dick was such a fine, loving fellow."

"You can go to Dick any day you like, Ann."

"I can't go till I have seen you married and in somebody's care. I promised your mother——"

"My father is a sufficient protection. I need no other."

"Well, you need not get on your high horse to say that to me. I have spent the best twenty years of my life taking care of you."

"And we have taken care of you, Ann. You have had twenty easy, profitable years," and with these words Lucia left the room, and went to her father with Ann's complaint.

The Colonel said he had noticed the same change, and when Lucia complained further, he advised her to appear oblivious of it. "You have not the old Ann

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Idle to deal with," he said. "It is now Ann Idle plus Dick Idle. It is a strange thing," he continued, "that if a woman marries a man beneath her, she descends rapidly to his level, whereas if a man marries a girl beneath him, he generally succeeds in lifting her up to his own higher position."

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CHAPTER XII

DEATH REDEEMETH LIFE

The long, long Love, the healing Love, the Love of Marriage! Love's Golden Net—but iron is only cobwebs to it.

IT was in the cool, beautiful September days that the Ragnors went back to Abbot's Rest. Ann had preceded them a week, and within the house all was comfortably in order. But the large flocks of white sheep had disappeared from the fells and an air of melancholy pervaded them, while the shepherds watched disconsolately the small remnants of their once large companies. The Ragnor sheep range was one of the largest and finest in the North Country, and Colonel Ragnor the most wealthy and notable of all its sheep lords, but his wealth in this respect appeared to have vanished. Dr. Studley said, "The epidemic fell on the Ragnor sheep just when it was at the height of its malignity. But you must take courage, Colonel," he added in a strong and cheerful voice. "The early September storms have

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cleansed and renewed both the air and the earth, and your head shepherd, Thomas Galt, will go into Scotland and buy you a still finer breed."

"Very good, Studley, but Galt will require a good deal of money to replace the hundreds of sheep lost, and you know I have had some extraordinary expenses lately——" and a sense of possible poverty made the Colonel's heart sick with fear.

"Whatever money is needful, if not in your purse, is in mine, and I would send Thomas off by tonight's express. You cannot have sheep too soon now. They must learn their places of rest and safety before winter."

So Thomas Galt went over the border that day, and the Colonel having done what he could to cover the bare fells once more, sat down to consider his position. He had spent so much in entertaining, in jewelry for Lucia, and in travel and hotel charges, that he was pinched for money. The situation was quite new. He had always been a forehanded man and to be in need of a few sovereigns seemed an incredible thing to him.

He could not help describing his position to Lucia and she listened with sympathy and understanding. "You are in the hands of a good creditor, father," she answered. "Dr. Studley will never trouble you about the money he loaned you, but why did you go to him?"

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"I did not go to him. He offered it freely, and I took it freely."

For a few minutes there was silence, then Lucia asked, "Do you think this will make any difference with Arthur?"

"No. Arthur is fond of money, but there are things he values beyond it. I shall write to him today, and tell him the situation truthfully."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes, if you would look to the house expenses a little. I see that Ann has hired four women. Surely that is an unnecessary number."

"I have already spoken to her about so many women trailing about the house. You cannot go into any room, but there is a woman with a duster trying to make you believe she is doing something. I told Ann they worried me, that I never knew when I was or could be alone, and she was quite cross and said, 'Lord Fenwick would be here anon, and she could not slave herself another year for him'—and so on. Ann is not like herself lately."

"Not at all. I told you *why*. We must let her go to Dick Idle. Half a year of his society—without the protection of my presence—will send her gratefully back to her position in Abbot's Rest. Poor Ann! She is making heart sorrow for herself."

"We all do that some way or about some person,

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father. I hope you will write Arthur at once. I shall not be happy until I know how he takes the loss of your flocks and consequent loss of money."

"I will write at once, Lucia."

The answer to this letter was prompt and sympathetic.

> I want no money with Lucia, dear Robert [Fenwick wrote]. To me, Lucia is the wealth of the world, and there is nothing I can compare her with. I am not insensible to the value of money, but Lucia and money cannot be named together or thought of as in any way equivalents. Before I left Fenwick, while settling—as far as I then could—business relating to the estate, I made my will and I gave every shilling of my personal estate to Lucia. This is no trifling gift, dear Robert. My mother left the results of sixty years' saving and wise investments to me and I have left everything—gold, lands, houses, and railway stock to Lucia. Judge then, if you need to worry concerning a dowry for your daughter. While I live she will share all I have; when I leave her, she will be among the richest women in England. There is only one other thing to say—that is, you are heartily welcome to any and all the financial help I can give you in renewing your flocks. There is no one that has more right to assist you in trouble than I have, and there is no one that will more gladly do so. I am your kin and your friend forever,
>
> ARTHUR HENRY FENWICK.

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Both father and daughter were very proud of this ready response, and there was a great and sudden uplifting of the household atmosphere. And though nothing was said and retrenchments went on in every direction, Ann and Dixon knew well the financial strain had passed away.

"And it is Lord Fenwick's doing," said Dixon. "He got to feel very friendly and loving with his cousin."

"It is nothing of the kind, Dixon. You must be a fool to think Fenwick would put out thousands for anyone but himself—it is Dr. Studley's doing, more likely."

"I'm sorry for the Colonel. I never thought of him getting poor."

"It is only a tight place. He is not poor—not he!"

"Debt is the worst of all kinds of poverty. If a man owes nothing, he is rich enough. That is what I say. Then comes this weary wedding again at the New Year, and goodness knows there was no end of extravagance about it last year's end."

"Extravagance! What do you mean?"

"The eating and drinking and dressing and constant entertaining."

"It was all as it should be. I hate to be in a scrimped kitchen, and if Miss Ragnor is going to be housekeeper, Mrs. Idle is ready for her own home —and it is ready for her."

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"*Why-a!* I never heard the like! What do you mean?"

"I mean that when Mr. Idle comes back from the highlands, he is going to take the Cross Keys public house. There is ten years of John Hartley's lease to run and Dick has bought it and all the house furnishings and the tap and bar fixtures as well."

"That would take a deal of money."

"It did, but what Dick did not have, Dick's wife could easy hand over—and that is what she did."

"Well I never—never heard the like!"

"So you see, I have a home of my own now and I am about tired of humoring a slip of a girl whom no one can please, and of bowing down to the Colonel's commanding ways. I'm going to the Cross Keys as soon as Dick comes home, and I tell you, Mr. Dixon, you'll be very welcome to smoke your pipe in its big kitchen and drink your pot of ale with the men that do the same." And Dixon stood up and bowed to the future mistress of the Cross Keys and Ann went off with a gracious smile, a very patronizing air, and a toss of her head which set all the pink ribbons in her cap a-flutter.

Dixon told this news confidentially to Dr. Studley. He was very proper about it and regretted that he felt it to be his duty to let the Colonel know how things stood in the kitchen. And Dr. Studley listened without apparent interest and said if Ann's

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business was of any importance to the Colonel, he undoubtedly knew all about it. But Dr. Studley thought it best to tell the Colonel and the Colonel talked the circumstance over with Lucia as soon as the doctor left. And the story got thus into the atmosphere of the house and disturbed and unsettled life and made everyone doubtful and suspicious, even though the contemplated change was not spoken of.

But this was but a small annoyance, and the sources of pleasure were many and sufficient for Colonel Ragnor and his daughter. That Lord Fenwick and Dr. Studley had both, without the slightest delay, stood up to the highest test of friendship, was a satisfaction the Colonel thought well worth the loss of his flocks. And Lucia's heart was always singing within her, because her lover rang true through the most searching of all trials—the money test. So these weeks of the early autumn were weeks of sweet and sudden soul growth to Lucia, for behind the foreground of her daily life she had received the kindest and sternest discipline that Love can impart. And a true love is regeneration! It is to be born again in or through someone else. It is *something happening* to the subconscious self—a growth? Yes. Sometimes a revolution.

Yet true love brings its own reward, even if unrequited. Those who love are the better for love's

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revelation; for love enriches, perfects, blesses the lover to his or her life's end. And it must be acknowledged that the Colonel's fears of Geoffrey's influence were reasonable ones. The young man loved Lucia tenderly and she knew it and felt it every hour they were together. But love is not the most powerful passion in the world. It bows down frequently to Duty and Honor, to filial and paternal affection, to patriotism, yes, even gold—gold can buy love in the marketplace. If the beloved of either sex were Calvinists, it would be wise for them to say, "I wish for a love that is mine by predestination as well as choice." Then love would be Destiny, and Destiny does all things well.

Now both Geoffrey and Lucia were quite aware of the danger they had to face every day. Lucia halted it at the first symptom. With her face burning she went to her room and sat down to angrily question herself: "Did I glance for a moment into Geoffrey's face as I should not have done? If I did, I wronged both him and myself."

"But did I? Tell the truth, Lucia."

"Yes."

"Purposely?"

"No, inadvertently. It could easily become of intent."

"But it shall not. If I could deceive Arthur now, my father would never speak to me again. I should

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be dishonored in everyone's sight, most of all in Geoffrey's and my own. Arthur would despise me; he would not weep for me. I should not be worth a tear. I am really Arthur's wife. I wear the wedding-ring he sent me," and she thoughtfully turned it round her finger. "No! No! No! Honor is greater than love! Honor is dearer than love. Honor is worth more than life. I should really die in the moment I first permitted Geoffrey to kiss me, or to even look love at me."

Undoubtedly Geoffrey held a similar session with himself, for after this there was a barrier between them kept sacred by a mutual honor that held itself above endearments, that had no mouth for kisses or laughter, but by determined self-repression kept down the heart a dignified prisoner behind very real bars.

Geoffrey had even stronger reasons for honorable behavior. Lord Fenwick had given him a very true and warm friendship, not infrequently he had called him brother. How then could he wrong him? He put the very thought angrily under his foot. In these conditions, though the Colonel's fears were natural, they were most unnecessary, and Lucia might have answered them as she answered Ann one day when she made some remark about the imprudence of being so much alone with "that man that hangs around Mrs. St. Clair."

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"Ann, I am never alone with Mr. Gardiner; my honor is always with me."

In about a month Thomas Galt and the shepherds he took with him, returned with fine flocks from the Cheviot mountains and the Gala Teviot and Borthwick Waters. And, Oh, what a joy it was to see the white companies with their plaided keepers, wandering over the bushless fells in the calm October mornings, or when the colored end of evening smiled:

> . . . miles and miles
> On the solitary pastures, where their sheep,
> Half asleep,
> Tinkled homeward through the twilight;
> Stray or stop,
> As they crop.

And they felt a love for the gentle creatures who soon learned their voices and were of trusting and kindly natures. And the Colonel generally made some remark about their being the revealers to him of two friends who rose gladly to his necessity the moment they heard of it. Then they went happily home to the fireside and the good meal spread in its glow and light. Perhaps there was a letter waiting them from Arthur or Geoffrey. It was always met with smiling welcomes, for they were getting anxious to hear of their return, the North Sea having no comfortable quarters after the advent of October.

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One evening when the Colonel had been speaking of this dreary, restless sea, there was one of the welcome epistles waiting. It was from Geoffrey, and addressed to the Colonel. He said they had been spending a week or more with a large highland farmer, whose big, far-spreading home was near Wick and who lived there among his own people in Homeric simplicity. But, he continued:

> "We have some splendid grouse shooting on his heathery hills, and Oh, sir, we would have given much for your company! Such sport as we had every morning and such lunches in a little glen beside a sparkling stream that gave us water to dilute or wine or whiskey. Our host was one of those highland gentlemen who supply the London markets with game, and he was well pleased when his guests were good shots and did not shatter the birds and render them unsalable. They were grandly welcome to his symposium pies, his Flambro' sausage, hard-boiled eggs, and wine or whiskey. While we eat, the gillies spread out on the heather the spoils of the morning, in order that their plumage might dry before packing because, I was told, a fine bird is often spoiled by one wet feather. He said also, that a good shot will easily kill, if he has keeper and friend with him, seventy-five brace of grouse, beside a few hares and snipe."

"That is too commercial for me," commented the Colonel. "I do not call it sport. I am glad I was

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not there. I might have said so and thus given offence."

"Yet you would have been right, father," said Lucia. "Does he say anything about Arthur?"

"He says Arthur shot well and enjoyed himself very much."

"How soon are they coming home, father?" asked Lucia.

He looked up and smiled at her and then glanced over the paper and answered, "Geoffrey says they start for home in a week. He is going to the St. Clairs'. Arthur is coming here, though he may have to stop at Fenwick Castle for a few days."

"How provoking! Fenwick seems to be on every road he travels. I wonder if he could come once to Abbot's Rest without first going to Fenwick?" She looked at her father, but as he took no notice of the remark, she added, "One might imagine that Lady Fenwick still sat in her big chair, and called, 'Arthur, come here! Arthur, go there!'"

"It is the call of his farms and his fields he listens to, Lucia; and it is for your welfare he listens."

"Then disappointment seems to be for my welfare. All my wishes end in it."

"Everyone must travel his own road."

"Can anyone tell where my road leads to?"

"Fenwick Castle, I should say."

There was a kind of finality in the Colonel's words,

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and the subject was dropped. Lucia lifted her sewing, and the Colonel took it gently from her hands. "Come," he said, "let us go over and see how Dr. Studley fares."

"I am very happy here with you, father."

"But we may add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier. I have not seen Studley for a week."

"He has had a cold and fever—I heard Dixon say so. Yes, I will go with you, dear."

Then Lucia rose and walked with her father to the Dower House, and there they found the doctor on the point of coming to Abbot's Rest. "I was anxious about you," he said as he clasped their hands. "I do not know why."

"You have been sick, and have not seen us for some days. That would be reason enough."

"Yes, but it was not that. I have had fever and have been dreaming. When did you hear from Arthur and Geoffrey?"

Then the Colonel gave him Geoffrey's last letter and he read it with pleasure and approval. "Arthur must be in fine health," he said, "to stand that kind of life—wet and dry, hot and cold, and a necessity to keep up with your party. This is excellent news, and I was fearful of bad news."

"What made you fearful, Doctor?" asked Lucia, and there was a strange eagerness in her voice.

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"Some fever-haunted dream, I suppose; the fancies of the unconscious man are a great mystery. If they leave Saturday morning, they might be home by Monday night. However, we must not expect too much of young men out for pleasure. They are apt to leave their road to get it."

"They are most sure of real pleasure by keeping to their road, at least on this occasion."

No one answered the Colonel. Studley was looking intently at Lucia and Lucia's eyes were fixed on Studley with that puzzled, eager, searching look in them which may be noticed in the eyes of those trying to remember a forgotten dream. The three went back to Abbot's Rest together and spent many hours in a conversation concerning the mystical and spiritual facts that surround physical man and physical life. The quiet spaciousness of the room, its soft gray light, the little blaze upon the hearth, the old memories that yet clung to the cloistered house had that night a singular power and influence, pressing down on the souls present, the sense of a life, not this life. *Something* was there, greater than themselves, something neither seen nor heard, something intensely real, that stirred at the very roots of their being.

Two days afterwards Lucia had a letter from Lord Fenwick. He said they had altered their plan, and instead of taking a train to Glasgow would take

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a little steamer, which would leave Wick the following morning. Both Geoffrey and himself preferred sea travel, and as the steamer was slow and had to stop at various towns on its way, it promised them a lazy trip down the Fife coast. He had never before written her so charming a love-letter; evidently the prospect of meeting in a few days had stimulated his passionate eagerness to do so, and he told no stories of grouse or highland gentlemen. On the contrary, the only incident he named was a curious supernatural occurrence which Geoffrey had in no way alluded to.

> We had [he said] a little dinner party last Monday evening, and *the* McAslin, a friend of our host, promised to be present *without fail* at six o'clock. But when six struck he had not arrived. All of us took out our watches, and as we did so, we heard the rattle of wheels and our host said, "That's McAslin. I know it because his horse has a loose shoe and he could not have it fastened today. Listen how it clatters!" It clattered up to the entrance door and he gave his usual double knock. The door was opened instantly by the man on watch, and *there was no one there.* At the stable no one had heard or seen anything of McAslin. A messenger was sent to his house to see if he was sick. *He was dead.* He had died while dressing for dinner, but he had kept his promise to be at our place at six o'clock. We may be home——

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"Stop, Lucia," said the Colonel. "Is that all about McAslin? There must be more."

Lucia glanced through the letter and said calmly, "That is all. Arthur may be home on Monday or Tuesday, I should think."

"It is a wonder Geoffrey did not name the circumstance."

"Geoffrey does not believe everything."

"It is natural to disbelieve what we cannot comprehend."

"Dr. Studley has made you believe in many things, father."

"Being a soldier, that was easy, for faith or belief in spiritual things is all to the soul that courage is to the body. I have faith, because I have courage to have faith. Do you see?"

"Not clearly. Dr. Studley knows the Fife coast and he will be able to say when a coasting steamer is likely to reach Glasgow; then a day is enough to reach Abbot's Rest."

"Much less than a day, if the wish and will to come earlier be there."

But when Dr. Studley was consulted, he said no one could tell the time with exactitude, especially if the skipper of the boat was also partly or largely its owner. "They may take on cargoes as well as discharge what they have, and are very much at their own pleasure, but I think Arthur could be here on

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Monday or Tuesday—unless he goes to Fenwick."

All Sunday Lucia privately watched and listened. She could not help feeling that Arthur would work some sort of a miracle to reach her. Had he not written in the letter next her heart:

> Darling! Darling! Darling! You are love and hope and joy to me! I shall not really live until I hold you once more close to my heart. Oh, for the blessed day that makes you mine! Then we shall part no more.

And the tender words made music in her heart, and she said to herself, "If in Shakespeare's day, lovers outrun the clock, surely now they will find means to outrun the train. I think Arthur will be here on Sunday afternoon. Of course there are no trains allowed to leave Glasgow on Sunday, but if he got to Glasgow on Saturday in time to catch a train for Carlisle, there are plenty of trains over the border, and he could be here easily on Sunday afternoon."

So Sunday her soul was at the window looking and watching, but nobody she cared for came. Monday it was just the same.

"There will be a letter from Fenwick tomorrow morning," said the Colonel very gloomily. But Tuesday brought neither lover nor letter from him.

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The Colonel refused to speak his name. "The man is sick again, I suppose," he replied when on Wednesday Dr. Studley uttered the first words of alarm.

"The young men were not to part until they reached Glasgow; if Arthur was sick, Geoffrey would have written. So then they must have reached Glasgow and parted."

"He is perhaps with Geoffrey at the St. Clairs'," said Lucia.

"No, in that case, if Arthur were sick, Mrs. St. Clair would have written. Do you remember the name of the boat?"

"Arthur told me in his last letter it was *The Mermaid*, a coastwise carrying and trading ship."

"Such boats are often detained; for instance, she would wait a day at my point, if by doing so she got twenty passengers. And people are leaving Scotland by every train or boat they can catch now."

"But why, Doctor?"

"The big summer hotels are closing and turning off their help. The hunting and shooting lodges are beginning to do the same thing. The herring fishery is over and men who have been busy in the North Sea are going back to their families with their wages in their pockets. Indeed, travelers of many kinds are now on all the Scotch roads leading south and Arthur and Geoffrey are among them. They must be here almost immediately."

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Studley spoke cheerily, but he was anxious and worried. "I will go down to the telegraph office," he said, "and have a word with the Hendersons and Ball and Reed of Glasgow. They are sure to know the whereabouts of *The Mermaid* and what time she docked at the Broomielaw." He was standing in the middle of the room as he said these words, and as he turned to the door, it opened slowly and Geoffrey entered.

It was visibly and positively Geoffrey, but not a Geoffrey any of them had ever seen before. The man was the same and yet quite different; no detail of bodily appearance could describe the change in him. But if a fresh, living, green leaf was taken and a hot iron passed over it, the change in the leaf would be marked and total. Every portion of it would be seared and singed; fiber and stem and the green soft leaf all alike show the burning, withering furnace from which it had suffered. So it was with Geoffrey. His strange pallor, his expression of unbearable grief, his trembling and weakness, his thin broken voice, the womanish tears brimming his eyes, the total and visible change in him showed plainly the inner man was the great sufferer and that Geoffrey had passed through the furnace with him.

He entered the room noiselessly and for a moment stood still and was speechless. Everyone rose to his feet and in tones of terror and amazement uttered

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his name. He went straight to Lucia and cried out in sudden agony:

"He is dead! He is dead! If I could have died for him! If I could have died!" Then he fell into a paroxysm of almost delirious grief. The Colonel went to the sideboard and brought him wine. Dr. Studley took his hands and comforted him as he well knew how to do. Lucia had sunk back in her chair and her father wished her to go to her room. But she would not.

"I must hear the worst before I go," she said. "I am sure some terrible thing has happened to Arthur."

And while the Colonel talked to his daughter, Dr. Studley comforted his friend, and in those few moments, though Geoffrey could not speak, he fell into a sleep so profound that he was insensible to all sound or motion and was laid on the sofa without being at all conscious of what had taken place. Then the room was darkened and Dr. Studley said, "I shall stay in this room and watch my patient. I think he will awake more like himself and be able to tell us—whatever we have to hear."

"Is he ill, Doctor, or likely to be ill?"

"He is not ill. He is at the last point of exhaustion—mental and physical—both. I should say flesh and blood could bear no more and the inner man knew sleep was the best and only restorer. He may

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sleep many hours, but he will be himself when he awakens."

"Then Lucia and I will go into the opposite parlor and you can look in on us as you feel inclined. What time is it?"

"About four o'clock. He may sleep ten or even fourteen hours without movement. Nature has a big job of repairing to do there."

Then the Colonel turned to Lucia's chair, but it was empty. She had gone to her room with her untold sorrow. Yet she knew Arthur was dead. Geoffrey had said that plainly. It appeared to her that this very message was the intense and only motive of his life or death journey. And if Arthur was dead, what else mattered? She was stunned and shocked and wounded, but her grief was not one that washes itself away in tears.

She was quite alone. Ann had gone to the village to see if the men hired to paper and paint the best rooms in the Cross Keys were doing their duty. The Colonel was angry at her absence and when she returned spoke more sharply to her than he had ever done before, and she was so cowed by his voice and manner she could hardly excuse herself and hoped she had not been needed for any duty in the house.

"Your mistress is in her room, doubtless in great trouble. Go and look after what she wishes."

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"Yes, sir. Immediate. Anything I can do in the trouble, sir, you know——"

"Unless you can do with Death, nothing you can do will avail."

"Dear me, sir! As bad as that! I will go to her at once. It will be Lord Fenwick as usual—no one else brings trouble here." The last sentence was apparently a comment made to herself, and uttered with the tone and air of one who speaks because they can't help it. At least it appealed to the Colonel in this way, and was so far in unison with his own deepest real feelings that he involuntarily replied:

"Lord Fenwick is said to be dead. Do all you can for Miss Ragnor."

"To be sure I will, sir, but Miss Ragnor is not like she was—*there*—he has left the room again and me talking about his business too! It is time I left Abbot's Rest and went to my own house. He might have told me where Dick was, for if there was danger for Lord Fenwick, there was danger for Dick. They were never far apart—I hope missee will have her tongue this afternoon and find herself able to talk. She says little to me these days. Them as brings up other people's children have a bitter lot—ingratitude and neglect is their payment. Ah, me! I do wonder if Dick is all right! Dick is more to me than either lord or lady."

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So with a cup of tea in her hand—the universal English panacea for all sorts and conditions of trouble—she went to Lucia's room. The door was locked, but after an interval of entreaty, Lucia rose and opened it.

"No, thank you, Ann, I want no tea. I want to be alone."

"I heard tell you was in trouble, miss, and——"

"I know how to bear trouble, Ann, for I know who is our strength in time of trouble."

"But it does you good to talk it over with them as loves you. And I am in trouble also, missee—about Dick."

"That is an old, old trouble, Ann."

"But different now. Dick loves me again and is good and kind. I heard Lord Fenwick was dead and I am feared for my Dick. They were never far apart."

"Naturally. I believe Dick was Lord Fenwick's valet."

"They was more like friends. My lord did nothing without Dick's advice and——"

"Ann, I want to be alone."

"Yes, miss, certainly, miss. Ann is of no use now. She used to be, but——"

"She is so taken up with Dick and herself now. No one can love or serve two at the same time."

She was walking restlessly about the floor and she

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heard only by a distinct effort the words Ann was saying. For there was a tumult in her heart like the surging rebellion of an angry crowd.

"Very good, missee. I'll go away to my lone sorrow. I think you might tell me a word about Dick."

"Ann, I heard nothing about Dick, but you might know Lord Fenwick well enough to know if there was trouble, he would look after Dick."

"Which the same would be right, miss, Dick having a wife now to consider. And, miss, if you would have taken my advice about Lord Fenwick——"

"Ann, I wish to be alone."

"In a minute, miss, I will go. I was only going to remind you that I said from the first that your poor, dear, dead mother would never permit you to marry Lord Fen——"

"Ann, how dare you? If you name my mother once more in connection with my marriage, I will never speak to you again, never! I want to be alone."

"I want to hear something about my Dick."

"Then go to my father, or Dr. Studley."

She went straight to the dining-room, and seeing its door wide open, was astonished. Nor would she have hesitated to enter the room if Dr. Studley had not with a peremptory motion waved her back. He knew her garrulous disposition and he walked be-

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hind her until it was impossible for Geoffrey in his life or death sleep to hear her. Then he said:

"Do not go near the dining-room."

"And where then will I serve dinner, Doctor?"

"There will be no dinner service today. When Colonel Ragnor and I need food, it must be brought with the utmost silence into the small parlor where we are sitting. Dixon will come and get orders as to what is wanted."

"Sir, I did not come about dinner. I came to hear what news there was about my Dick."

"None at all."

"But he was with Lord Fenwick. You know they were always together."

"No, not always. Dick was not in America nor yet in many other places with Lord Fenwick."

"But he was with him on this last trip to the Highlands, and the great London doctor showed my Dick what to do for Lord Fenwick when his heart was bad, and so Dick has gone and will go——"

"You go to the kitchen at once, Ann, and let it be your duty to keep the most absolute silence there —even a teaspoon falling might be a death blow. Do you understand?"

"But my Dick——"

"He was not named. I dare say he will be in the kitchen before midnight."

"It is very hard, sir."

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"Very hard indeed on all who love Lord Fenwick. The Colonel feels it much, and as for Miss Ragnor——"

"I have been to her, and took a cup of tea with me—though needing it myself—and she was not crying nor in trouble, and she knows nothing of the grief in my heart, for a lover is never to be compared to a husband."

Dr. Studley did not answer. He had gradually drawn her as she was talking to the kitchen door, and he requested her again to remain in the kitchen until midnight and to see that all was kept quiet.

As he returned to the Colonel he looked at Geoffrey. He lay still as death on the very spot where they had laid him. Sunk far below the tide of usual sleep, his breath was deep down and hardly perceptible; but his pulse, though weak, was even and not dangerously below its normal condition; and from Geoffrey's side to the Colonel he went with a hopeful face.

"He sleeps well, Colonel. When he awakes, he will have regained his physical power and be able to give us his tidings—good or bad."

"Arthur is dead. There is no doubt of that and my heart aches for my little girl. I wonder if there was any accident—it is so sudden—so terribly unexpected."

"The accident has been long foreseen. He had

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a heart responsive to every emotion and unable to endure it. He doubtless died in some moment of great excitement, and knew not death until he realized the strength of immortality. It was perhaps a glorious moment to him."

"I am thinking of what it is to Lucia."

"It is all right, though dark and hard to us."

"Why does not God explain such interferences with life? If He would only explain His reasons——"

"A God explaining and giving reasons would be a plaintive thing; and as we cannot foresee, we should not understand nor yet believe. God expects us to trust. It is the great thing that we can do for Him."

Then there was a silence so deep that the ashes falling from the grate to the hearth were startling. The opposite room was equally still; the whole household was waiting in silent fear; the message sealed behind the lips of the sleeper in it.

He did not awaken until the next day's sun was high in the heaven. Early in the day Ann had gone to Lucia and she was with her when the first movement was heard. "Dixon is carrying in his breakfast," Ann said. "I can hear the rattle of china and silver, so Mr. Gardiner must have awakened. I heard also the Colonel's voice; he was speaking to Mr. Gardiner."

"How was he speaking, Ann?"

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"As if he was soothing or comforting him."

"Dear father, he has been trying to comfort me often through this long, hard night."

"Now you will have your breakfast?"

"Yes, I am longing for a cup of coffee."

"And you shall have it, dearie, instantly."

And Ann was in her very kindest mood and brought up all she thought good for Lucia, and they smiled at each other and were friends again. For in some way Dr. Studley's manner had frightened and made Ann thoughtful. She had sat up with the family all night and considered many past kindnesses from them that she had almost forgotten in the flush of her husband's returning love.

"It is so easy to be set up with a sweetheart," she thought. "Dick has been with me most of the summer, and eat and drank his full, and had all my savings to buy the Cross Keys and the thought of being master in his own public house had made him good-tempered. Why wouldn't it? And I have worn more new ribbons and finer aprons than enough because he liked his wife to look handsome—and he said I was handsomer than any woman he knew—and I was happy and good-tempered. What woman wouldn't have been? But my family, both the Colonel and the Miss, have been good to me in every kind of time for twenty-two years." Such reflections had done Ann's temper good. They had bruised her

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selfishness, and it is from this bruising the fragrance of life comes.

Dr. Studley said it was close upon twelve o'clock when Geoffrey first stirred. He heard the movement and went softly towards him, and as he did so, the sleeper opened his eyes. They brought him coffee and then took him upstairs to refresh himself as much as possible. Then Dixon brought him the breakfast Dr. Studley thought best, and he ate and drank and felt his strength returning. And when he took the Colonel's hand and heard his words of sympathy and his eyes fell upon Lucia, he felt that he must speak and relieve the tension of their suspense. Lucia had spent a hard night, but just before daylight had received the courage and comfort which comes to the soul who has discovered the way to give up its little self and find a greater self there. So the struggle was over for Lucia. She had accepted the will of God as her will; and though her eyes were heavy with weeping and sleepless sorrow, the pallor of her face was transfigured by the light that can come only from an internal illumination. She sat beside her father and her head leaned against his shoulder; but her large eyes—tearless and unspeakably sad—questioned Geoffrey and would not be denied. Then the Colonel took the initiatory and asked, "When did you leave Wick, Geoffrey?"

"We left Wick on Tuesday. We had not in-

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tended to leave until Thursday night, and we expected to travel easily, and be in Glasgow on Saturday. Then I was at home, and Arthur—Arthur intended to be *here* on Sunday afternoon."

"You did not hold to this intention?" asked the Colonel.

"No," replied Geoffrey. "A rather singular circumstance of a supernatural character occurred on Monday night. Arthur told you about it and I need not repeat his story, though it was the moving point of our destiny. He could not forget it. He did not sleep that night and in the morning said he must go away. The house had become uncanny and oppressive to him. So after breakfast we paid our host and took our departure. He said four others had done the same thing, and scoffed at our 'English terror of what we could not see.'

"A pleasant journey brought us to Aberdeen on Wednesday afternoon. Arthur went alone to look around the town and met an old acquaintance on the street who told him he must not on any account neglect the sail down the Fife coast. I had no objection, for I like a ship better than a train, and we went together to look for a passage. The regular steamers had left at noon, but there was a carrying steamer at midnight, and we took passage on her to Glasgow.

"We had a wretched night in many respects, but the captain was surly in manner and seemed to dis-

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like any notice from his passengers. On Thursday morning there was general dissatisfaction among the passengers and many angry requests for the captain who never appeared. To my surprise Arthur was in the wildest spirits. He turned everything into amusement. His mood was unnatural. Never before had I seen anything like it. I began to watch him as a physician watches his patient; really I was afraid the hallucination of Monday night had unsettled his mind.

"I was standing by the companion-way musing miserably when a woman touched me on the arm. She said, 'I am the stewardess of this wicked old tub, and I have been watching your friend. You had better do the same thing.' I turned sharply on her, and asked, 'Why do you say that?'

" 'He is *fey*,' she answered.

" '*Fey?*' I repeated. 'Do you mean—drunk?'

" 'No, indeed! I mean he is *fey* or close at hand to something he came into this life to meet. When he has done it, he will die.'

"About eight o'clock at night, Arthur—in spite of a fear and restlessness that had touched everyone, fell into a death-like sleep. No noise disturbed him, he slept as one that had forgotten life, and hour after hour I watched him. About six in the morning he was awake, wide awake, more awake than I ever saw a mortal man.

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" 'Geoffrey,' he said, in a low firm voice, 'they are scuttling the ship.[1] I saw them as I slept. We must go and look after the scoundrels,' and he got into his clothes like a miracle. He never thought of his valet. I looked at him in amazement. He was a new man. He was much taller and stronger. His eyes were like a flame, there was a vivid color in his cheeks, he walked firmly and rapidly. The inner man had full control and I saw Arthur Fenwick that day as the bowmen of Angiers and Agincourt saw Lancelot Fenwick, when he drove the French before him, 'gigantic, powerful, his helmet far above all others, his sword like a flame.'

"He turned to me at the saloon door and said, 'You will stand at my right hand,' and I answered 'Until death.' We looked at the captain's chair. It was empty; and we went on deck together. The best boat was gone, and we could just distinguish the captain and his confederates on the horizon."

" 'I am captain on this boat now,' he said, and no

[1] In the latter half of the nineteenth century the great commercial crime of heavily insuring unseaworthy craft and then permitting them to go to the bottom, and even helping on this catastrophe, was so alarmingly common that Samuel Plimsoll, Member of Parliament for Derby, prepared a law to safeguard the lives of sailors and passengers; and in 1876 his law was rendered obligatory. He is remembered as "The Sailors' Friend" and honored by the "Plimsoll Mark" on all ships, above which mark no ship can be laden. The shipwreck here described was the result of crime, and not of wind and waves; and my hero, Geoffrey Gardiner, a few years later worked with Samuel Plimsoll in Parliament for the passing of the Plimsoll Bill.

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one would have denied his words that looked at him. He sent me for some Fife fishers we had been talking to the previous day, and he ordered the stewardess to bring to where he stood by the two boats all the women and children. Very soon there was a confusion impossible to describe—prayers and weeping among the women, cursing and fighting among the crew, but he stood there putting the women and children into the boats and felling every man who attempted to interfere with his work. One he shot, two or three he threw overboard, and growling and swearing they were all obliged to obey.

"Four Fife fishers went with the first boat. They said they knew the coast, and if the weather kept fine could land their load in a few hours. In the second boat every woman and child on the sloping deck of the sinking ship was sent to safety and there was only then one boat left for the crew and male passengers. In the midst of a frightful fight for life, this boat was filled, Dick Idle, being at his master's order, the last man to enter it. He shouted through the clamor, 'Good-bye, Dick!' and Dick wept, and said he would stay, but a peremptory *'Go'* sent him in a hurry to the place kept for him.

"This boat took the last hope with it and the few men remaining on the ship began to seize any spar or chair or rigging they could find. In these last moments, Arthur and I were alone. He was smil-

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ing, though in acute agony, up to the knees in water and fighting his last fight with the weak physical heart that had been the delayer and damper and destroyer of all the days of his life.

"We had a few sacred moments at the last. I said a word about the marvelous strength he had suddenly possessed. He said it was not a strength lying under sinews and muscles, but a strange irresistible force and power that closed round and filled him even to his finger tips.

"At the last his eyes wore a new, deep look, as if a veil before them had been rent. The bitterness of death lay behind him and not before. If he suffered he smiled and made no complaint. He left love for all and told me to say to Lucia he died with her in his thoughts. His last word was her name, but he could only utter half of it, the other half he took—into the other world with him.

"The water was now above our knees, but I had told the Fife men in control of the last boat to stand by till they saw what would happen to us. I held him close, but he found a way to pass from me to God, and when I saw all was over, I slipped over the gunwale with him clasped in my left arm and made for the boat. It came to meet me and I laid the dear dead in it. There was great opposition to this, and the manager of the boat said he was afraid it was more than it could carry to shore. Then a

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big, heavy Shetlander said: 'Take in the dead man. His friend and I will trust the sea. We are both good swimmers.' I had told Dick what to do if this thing happened—and so we parted."

At this point Geoffrey broke down and wept passionately. The Colonel went to his side and kissed him tenderly, and Dr. Studley got him a glass of wine and water. They urged him to rest a while, but he could not—the urge to clear his heart of all its lonely sorrow, was too great.

"There is not much more," he said, "and you must hear it all. My companion and I were picked up by a fishing-boat just before dark, and I paid the fishers to carry me to the land. I had of course lost nearly all my clothing, but I bought a fisherman's overcoat, and got to Edinburgh the next day. Here I was compelled to buy shoes, stockings, clothing of all kinds, but I reached Fenwick Castle on Saturday. Dick had not arrived with Arthur's body and I waited Sunday and Monday very anxiously. It came on Tuesday morning. I saw it laid beside his mother's and started for Abbot's Rest immediately after the ceremony."

A few moments of intense emotion followed. Geoffrey wept with uncontrolled passion; the Colonel was hardly less affected. Lucia tried to comfort him, and Dr. Studley whispered words of strength to the distracted man. But comfort must be self-

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evolved to be of real use. And Geoffrey was not helped until he told himself with a kind of triumphant joy and pride:

"Just like a conquerer he went! Hired on the wide sea at the eleventh hour, he could tell of thirty-seven souls, saved in that last hour! There was no blank page at the end of his life. It was a fight and a noble one. The Master has given him the full day's wage. I do not doubt it."

Now the heart of God is conquered by a cry from the heart of man, and as they talked together, a great peace and hope came to each. For it is the ground we do not tread on that comforts and supports us—

> Nothing before, nothing behind,
> The footsteps of Faith
> Tread on the seeming void, and find
> The rock beneath.

Soon they went out into the September garden. The hollyhocks, the dahlias and the beauty of flowers and bronzing ferns were all around, though the trees were changing or losing their foliage. And they had no young twigs now, no nests, no secrets. But there were flocks bleating on the hills and murmuring bees and cooing doves and the voice of running waters. And they talked together of that friend of theirs

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. . . who lives in God.
That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

This central tract of emotion where life and death meet is one full of strange comforts, and no one knew better than Dr. Studley how to find them. Thus, when the Colonel spoke of the state of death, he answered calmly: "Ah, my dear friend, but death is not a state. It is *only a road to a state.* You must remember," said the doctor, unconsciously lifting his eyes heavenward, "that if death deprives us of physical consciousness, it also brings to free development those transcendental faculties of which in dreams and in somnambulism we obtain intimations but which are hindered in life by our physical organism. It is thus Paul speaks of the transcendental faculties of those who have been illuminated by death, and thus taste of the powers of the world to come."

So they talked the sorrowful hours away, but all sorrow finally finds refuge in sleep, and God gives it to his beloved when the way is too hard or too long; and they were all comforted in that sleep, so that the next day they spoke with loving hopefulness of that friend of theirs who lived with God.

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CHAPTER XIII

LOVE HATH EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE

Hired on the sea at the eleventh hour he took his full day's wage. There was no blank page at the end of his Life's Book.

LOVE hath everlasting remembrance," said the great Jeremy Taylor. Was he right in such a statement? Yes, if we cast out of consideration the mere passion of the flesh for the flesh, and count love to be what it really is, a divine quality of the soul, coeval with its existence and sharing in its immortality. The love of a soul for a soul is the secret of life. It redeems and lifts up. It enlightens and advances. Indeed, a soul marriage is the absolute acme of life.

Such marriages occur far more frequently than we recognize. Why do women cheerfully follow men into all kinds of perils and deprivations? Why do they stand by them in sickness and shame and sorrow and direst poverty? Why do men give up rank, riches, fame, and all earthly good for some woman,

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in whom to the average observer, there is neither beauty nor any other quality to make her desirable. How often in the most ordinary daily life do we hear the following remarks, "Whatever could the man see in her? She is neither pretty nor clever." And his answer would be, if he cared to answer at all:

"I have found her whom my soul loveth."

In the city of A—— a woman, beautiful, rich, and highly cultivated, married a man whom everyone declared to be unworthy of love. But she loved him and stood by him in all the troubles he managed to get into, paid his debts, nursed him tenderly through sickness self-induced, and never by word or look reproached him. People wondered at her and many blamed and despised such forbearance. Then a great calamity fell upon the city and this man, far above all others, rose to the occasion and finally laid down his life helping those who had no other help or comfort. And his wife rejoiced, weeping even as she rejoiced. "None of you knew my husband," she said. "I only saw the grand inner man, and it was the inner man I adored. He was worthy of all love. I knew him the moment we met. We had gone through life together many times before this life."

This is the love that hath everlasting remembrance. It is not to be named with that fierce, abrupt, fleshly passion, flaming up at the sight of beauty, and cooling and dying as quickly as it rose.

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Now Geoffrey's love for Lucia was a soul love. The moment he saw her, *he remembered;* not consciously perhaps, but with a positive claim that even astonished himself. And child as she was, Lucia had a similar experience. If their marriage had not been interfered with, it would have quickly followed, yet such an easy consummation would have deprived both of the wonderful discipline and experience which Arthur Fenwick brought them.

For one more year of life they were kept apart by social customs and many business transactions relating to the large fortune which had been left Lucia by Lord Fenwick. She was not of age and Colonel Ragnor and Dr. Studley were made the guardians of her estate. Many meetings came naturally from such an association, but both behaved exactly as they would have done if Lord Fenwick had been present. The fact was that they were both bound by the traditional year of mourning, perhaps more so, because he whom they mourned had himself submitted to its restrictions in a very marked and painful manner.

So the days and the months followed each other and Lucia was not unhappy. She had a kind of solemn glory in the death of Arthur Fenwick. She was proud of his last hour, and thanked God for it! All the newspapers in the land lauded his heroism, his wonderful strength and courage, and the noble cheer-

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fulness with which he died to save others. Upon the whole, she felt that she deserved some praise for having loved so worthily.

But though father and daughter went often to London on Lucia's business they spent the year virtually at Abbot's Rest. And the Colonel began to take a great interest in his flocks, to know many by name, and to be very happy when they answered his call and followed him. Also a new interest arose for Lucia. Ann's removal to the Cross Keys placed on her the oversight of her house and servants, and she was not ill-pleased at Ann's departure. "She does not know her place at all, father," she said, "and now that I am Arthur's heiress as well as your daughter, it is not right to be treated like a child."

Still with all alleviations the year's mourning went tardily away. Perhaps no one was sorry when it was over. The Colonel gave the first intimation of it. He came to breakfast one morning wearing a brown tweed suit and the woesome band of crêpe was removed from his arm. But Lucia did not speak of the change, only noticing it by her violet dress and its profusion of white lace trimmings in the evening. And life went on in its usual grooves and Arthur Fenwick's memory became like a half-effaced pastel in their hearts, vague as a shadow, yet tenderly mournful as if asking to be remembered, but

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> No word comes from the dead,
> Whether at all they be!

and *just one word!* Oh, what a difference it would make! We should never forget our dead if we heard from them. At long intervals their message might come, but if the surety of it was with us, we should never forget.

This year's experience had made a wonderful difference in Lucia. The sense of her independence and of her personal wealth, the necessity of being compelled to make quick decisions and to look the stubborn facts of financial matters in the face, had developed her natural self-reliance and unconsciously added dignity and decision to her manner and speech.

These qualities were much encouraged by Ann's departure to her own home, for it compelled Lucia constantly to decide many household matters that had hitherto been arranged by Ann. And she soon began to feel a great pleasure in the sense of owning and directing her home. Never before had it felt so dear to her. She looked at the wonderful wealth and beauty of its materials and rearranged every room in it. The Colonel was astounded at the effects she made. In a little while there was a sense of *life* all through the house, not only the look of a splendid apartment, but the *feel of home* and of *human presence* in it.

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Geoffrey and Dr. Studley were as much amazed as the Colonel at these changes. "It is marvelous," said Dr. Studley to the Colonel, "what a clever woman can do with chairs and tables, a few pictures and a little drapery. Upon my word, Lucia has informed every room with a sense of its obligations —the dining-room looks like a dining-room. Tired and hungry men can come into it and feel there is nothing for them to do but be quiet and refresh themselves—nothing they are called upon to notice and admire. Even the few pictures in it are hung so low, that no effort is necessary in order to see them. And everyone has a character referable to its position —a string of fine trout by the side of a lovely stream —or a cock grouse strutting fearlessly with his mate on the October hills, for then he is the most beautiful bird in the world, with his bright red comb and rich dark brown plumage shining in the sun—that's the kind of picture to see in a dining-room. And how is it that the moment we now enter the drawing-room, we think of a Strauss waltz and see lovely women dancing amid its soft shades and dainty water-color sketches? And, O Colonel, its changed sleeping places! What nests of comfort they are! I declare you can only say that some fairy has walked through Abbot's Rest, and made all that was incomplete, perfect; all that was hard and formal, soft and easy; all that was commonplace, beautiful."

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And Geoffrey said the same things to Lucia, only in a rather different way, for he was in constant fear of speaking a word too much or going a step too far. He had been, during the year in which the Fenwick estate was in settlement, of immense help to the Colonel going frequently to London and Fenwick about various matters relative to the carrying out of Lord Fenwick's will. One of the greatest difficulties in this matter related to the sale of the lovely estate of De Montane. Lord Fenwick had bought the place intending to give it to Lucia as a wedding present; but at the time of his mother's death, feeling the insecurity of human purposes, he settled it on her, independent of all personal considerations whatever.

The new Lord Fenwick wanted it because, as he thought, De Montane added a romantic and antique character to his title. He wished to be not only Lord of Fenwick but also Lord of Fenwick and De Montane. He finally offered to buy the estate, but Lucia would not sell a gift so entirely personal and her obstinacy on this subject astonished the Colonel.

"Fenwick offers you a good price, Lucia, and—"

"I will take no price for it, father."

"As your guardian, working for your interests, I have a right to insist upon the sale," he said.

"But you will not exercise your right, dear father."

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"Dr. Studley, Lucia——"

"Thinks there is no harm in my holding it. It will gain in value, he says."

"Lucia, how can it? The hills can indeed be covered with the little black-faced sheep, but that manner of making it pay entails great outlay and the hiring of many shepherds who must be looked after."

"I never thought of such a thing, father. It is on the west side, extremely picturesque, and almost overhangs the sea. In a few years I will build a fine summer hotel on the highest bluff, and rent the building. Geoffrey saw at once its future value as a summer resort. He thinks a little town would gradually grow up round the hotel, and the busy happy place be the finest of all monuments to Arthur. He is sure Arthur would like this living memorial far, far better than the most stately marble one in Fenwick Church—and I think as he does."

So the effort to buy and to sell De Montane delayed the settlement of Lucia's concerns, but in some way or other the discussion of the subject educated in Lucia a strong proclivity to decide her own affairs and a business aptitude quite remarkable. The great point in this dispute was that Geoffrey stood by Lucia without rhyme or reason. He saw at the beginning of the proposition that Lucia considered it mean and unkind to sell her lover's gift ere he

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was a year in his grave, and he respected her loyalty to the dead. Doubtless he argued from it that she would be equally loyal to himself if he could only gain her allegiance.

But the Colonel did not approve of the stand he had taken. "It is pure selfishness in Geoffrey," he said to Dr. Studley. "He has the mercantile instinct. He intends to marry Lucia—if he can get her—and he, perhaps correctly, foresees the positive and splendid success of a fine hotel on the De Montane bluffs round which a town would undoubtedly grow—but—but—"

"But what, Colonel?"

"I don't want my girl to go into business. Let her live off the land, as her forefathers have done. Why does Geoffrey stay month after month in your home, Doctor?"

"He is studying Greek and Latin and a few other subjects in which I myself take a great interest. His education was a simple commercial one. He is now endeavoring to make himself more deserving of any woman he may marry."

"Of Lucia, for instance."

"He certainly has a wonderful affection for Lucia. Could she do better?"

"She could marry Lothian or Ryecroft. The latter will be an earl."

"If he lives."

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"Yes."

"But these men are not to compare with Geoffrey Gardiner. They are oldish, not at all rich, and have many objectionable qualities and habits."

"I see you favor Geoffrey, Doctor."

"I favor no one with any fixed desire. The heart of a woman is her destiny. Lucia will marry the man she loves, or remain unmarried. I have that sure confidence in her; and I believe her to be incapable of loving a man unworthy of her."

The De Montane affair settled, it soon became a forgotten thing, and a house without some difference of opinion to adjust or some little trouble to get the better of is often deadly still and monotonous. There were days which had seemed to Lucia forty hours long, and evenings—when Geoffrey was away—of unbearable monotony; for Geoffrey had become by this time all the difference in her life between delightful satisfaction and wearisome ennui.

In fact her love troubles were fast becoming a tale of old unhappy things, and a quiet joy came into her heart, as one by one the clouds departed and the light steadily grew. During this long waiting time she had had some rare but imperishable moments, when she had *met herself* and in her lonely, aching disappointment, finding all earthly comfort fail, had fallen back on God the Comforter; and latterly she had begun to feel that this God was both wise and

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loving and gave new gladness when the old he took away. She had told herself frequently during the last months of the year's quiet that she did not desire the things she once desired, and could not be happy in the circumstances she had once looked forward to with pride and satisfaction. And perhaps after all, it is well for us that the past is generally as unattainable as the future.

One afternoon at the end of September, she was sitting with her father in disconsolate silence. It was too hot either to walk or to ride, and every one of Lucia's employments had lost all savor to her. The piano was closed and she was resolved it should remain closed; there was not a book she wanted to read; and it was too hot to sew. There appeared to be nothing for her to do, so she made herself comfortable among the sofa pillows and gave up her mind to feeling and foolish foreseeing.

Presently the Colonel fell asleep, and the *Army and Navy News* dropped from his hands to the floor. Lucia looked idly at the paper, but made no movement, and lying thus between sleeping and waking she saw Dixon enter the room and leave some letters upon the table.

Lucia did not take much interest in the Colonel's mail. For there was usually a large percentage of advertisements in it for things necessary on a sheep farm or in the care and culture of gardens; and

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two of the letters just noticed appeared to be of this kind. These two out of the three he threw carelessly aside, but the third he read with a speculative face. It was from Ann Idle. In it she begged to come home. She said Dick had got her last shilling and that everything at the Cross Keys was in the hands of the sheriff, and Dick gone no one knew where. The Colonel could not read the letter without feeling very sorry for the woman, and when he reminded himself of the probable early marriage of Lucia, he was personally pleased at the thought of Ann's return to Abbot's Rest. It would at least insure his physical comfort, and that was a matter of some importance to Colonel Ragnor.

Very soon Lucia began to feel that he wished her to awake, and she obeyed the impression, and with a pretty shake of her head said, "It is really three o'clock, I see. Have I been asleep, father?"

"You looked like it, and I wanted to tell you something."

"What is it, father?" she asked as she eagerly brought a chair beside him.

"Well, it is this—Ann wants to come back. All has gone to smash at the Cross Keys and she is without a home or a shilling or, I fear, a friend. What are we to do?"

Now while the Colonel had been speaking, Lucia's mind had been busy. She knew her marriage

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was within her will. She knew that one word, one look of encouragement would be sufficient to change this conviction into a blissful reality; and that very afternoon she had been telling herself that it was time she made poor Geoffrey less anxious, and more to Abbot's Rest. She had her lesson, she would happy. And in such a case Ann would be invaluable know her place and with a confident smile she told herself, "She will know *my* place also for the future." So after a proper interval of reflection, she answered:

"Father, I think we ought to tell Ann to come home and give her her old position back. She is very respectable and will be very respectful to me now. I have missed her in some respects, for as Mrs. Pearson said, she had been with me all my life and gives at least a sense of almost motherly protection."

"Mrs. Pearson's remark was almost impertinent. You do not need motherly protection now, and you have a very careful fatherly protection."

"All that is understood, father. But Ann has a certain claim upon us and I am not without affection and gratitude. I can order our house now and Ann will obey my orders. It was her ordering me that I objected to. But I think now you may tell Ann to come home as soon as she likes."

"I am glad you think as I do. Poor Ann! Her

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husband has taken her last shilling and left her—gone, she knows not where."

"Are you going to Lothian's tonight?"

"I think I ought to go."

"Then call on Ann and tell her to make haste here and not talk too much of her troubles. I am tired of love troubles of all kinds."

"Love and death or love and sorrow are always together—people must talk of them."

"Oh no, father! Not always, surely."

"Ask your own heart. But I will dress early and go to the village and send Ann up here."

"Do you know where she is?"

"Yes. At the Cross Keys until Saturday."

This change proved a very contentful, peaceful one. Ann took her old work and very near her old position in Abbot's Rest, and everyone was satisfied, and as Lucia's methods in the house had become fixed, Lucia was glad enough to delegate to Ann the trouble of seeing them carried out.

Then there was a week or two in the which Love poured heaven into that quiet house of life called Abbot's Rest. But behind this foreground of daily life, its sights and its feelings, there was to Geoffrey and to Lucia also a far sweeter and more satisfying existence, for not yet "had fled the visionary gleam," and around them still the glory and the dream of unspoken love made a different world. And perhaps

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Lucia was not anxious to ally this glory and this dream of a perfect love with the ordinary affairs of life. She had mentally set several occasions when she would permit Geoffrey to speak and when she would answer him to their united happiness; but into every such occasion, there had crept some shadow of discontent or some trifling disappointment, and she was resolved everything in that hour should go according to her plan and desire.

One afternoon the Colonel asked her to walk with him as far as John Studley's, and she had fully determined if Geoffrey called that afternoon affairs should come to a perfectly happy understanding between them. But the invitation satisfied her. It said plainly, "This is likely an unfortunate time, or why else should you be asked to forego such an important intention?" She hardly knew whether or not she was disappointed. Her present life was so sweet and she was so happy in it, a change made by herself might not be a good one. It was better to wait until the hand invisible, all-powerful, and all-wise made the move that sooner or later was sure to come. Very pleasantly she went with the Colonel to Dr. Studley's and found that the shepherds were a little anxious about the flock on the highest fell. "I think," said the Doctor, "we had better walk up there and see what is really the matter. And I will tell Geoffrey that Lucia is here and he will see her

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safely home." And as Dr. Studley spoke, Geoffrey entered the room with an open book in his hand and Lucia looked at him pleasantly but critically.

Into the large scholarly room he brought an astonishing sense of power, for he was not only handsome, but handsome on so large a pattern that it excluded the idea of whatever was mean and petty. His massive head and face showed the mind to be well rooted in matter. His eyes, so bright, so seeking, were without guile or misgiving—his lips finely shaped—his form straight and towering—his manner frank and open-hearted—the very reverse of the languid grace, of the high-bred slender Lord Fenwick.

And Oh, the clasp of his hand and the look in his eyes! She had never before thought him so handsome, indeed she had an instant's recollection of thinking him rather ugly when she first met him in Glasgow. But Geoffrey was now unmistakably handsome in the highest form possible. His soul had been in the schools of Love and Death, there it had become beautiful, and it was gradually remodeling and beautifying its earthly dwelling-place. Even in old age it will perform this miracle—how much more then when youth and love work with it?

"Let us walk home this charming afternoon," he said, and as she smiled and nodded, he added, "and let us go round about for the nearest way."

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And she put her hand in his and they went slowly towards the pine planting. The Colonel had built a rest among these trees, for he loved their fragrance—a rest of rough stones topped with two large flat flags; and they sat down there and were speechless in their love and happiness. For to both had come the same sense of fatality, and as they walked on and on both felt the sweet air, the fresh wind, the bright sunshine, and the little birds twittering secrets in the tree-tops to be so many friends accompanying them to the turning-point of their lives. The sunshine came through the waving branches above them, full of golden shadows and fell all over the white-clad maiden like some mystical mantle. Geoffrey looked large, ruddy and radiant with life. Her lovely face, her light, slender figure, her most beautiful arms, and that beauty of promise, which sets the budding rose above the full-blown flower, had never been so noticeable and so charming. And when she lifted her love-beaming eyes his words were not to be restrained, and he cried out:

"O love! O my love! Lucia! Lucia!"

The bliss so long afar was at length so nigh she could no longer resist its claim upon her heart. She whispered, *"Geoffrey"* and his arm was round her waist and his kiss was on her lips. Then in that intimate ardor that dispels all doubt and all disquietude, she gave him that one little word which

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makes all things sure. For his kisses unbarred her soul and love grew so insensibly and so fast, it must always have been there. For once then time and place and the loved one were all together. Naturally so, for

> All things come by Fate to flower,
> At their unconquerable hour.

Then how sweetly and swiftly time went by! And the large yellow harvest moon and the sweet strength of startide made their hearts' springs running over with sweetest love. Geoffrey's desire—like all strong desires—had at last by its own energy fulfilled itself.

They were unconscious of time until the pale, pensive twilight of the wood admonished them. Then they went into the open and saw the departing sunbeams smiling on the last fell top. But the fading day and the rising moon only brought them fresh rapture. With serenely happy faces and clasped hands they walked slowly homeward. And how it came let lovers tell, they both thought of Arthur Fenwick, and both at the same moment spoke of him. But even this sad subject was only a part of that luxurious woe which the Colonel had declared in some form accompanied love.

"Father said death or sorrow always came with a true Love. Do you think so, Geoffrey?" Lucia

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"She whispered, '*Geoffrey*' and his arm was round her"

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softly asked, as they entered the gates of Abbot's Rest together.

"If souls come into this world to find each other, and one *knows* and the other cannot be instructed by the one knowing, then I can understand that sorrow or death in a great variety of forms might ensue. Perhaps Arthur's death was necessary. I have always believed that he would have been living happily and in good health this day if he had married the lovely lady who is the mother of his two sons. She knew and obeyed her heart; he also knew, but he had not the moral courage to defy the world."

"And his mother!"

"True."

Then they were at the door, and the Colonel stood there to scold about the belated dinner, but there was that in the faces of the truants that forbid it. They looked so superhumanly happy that he divined the truth and in a voice distinctly saddened said only:

"Come in, children!"

"We will be ready for dinner in ten minutes, father. Tell Ann to see it served."

As Dixon was serving dinner, nothing was said of the new engagement, patent enough to all who saw the parties to it; but the conversation turned unavoidably upon Lord Fenwick, for the Colonel had received by that night's mail a letter signed by

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his two sons, informing him that their mother had died the previous day.

"Poor Arthur!" he continued, "his life was a prolonged disappointment. He never got what he wanted unless he tore it through the iron gates of society or life." Then between them, this memory touched so solemnly with the intimacies of life, its meetings and partings, became almost a presence; and Geoffrey said:

"We seem to forget, but we do not; we appear to transfer so heartlessly the love of yesterday to to-day, but we do not. Every affection has its place, and whether it be *here* or *there* we give it a sacred or tender remembrance."

"John Studley got her last letter. We are both going tomorrow morning to be with the boys until after the funeral," said the Colonel.

Then Lucia looked at Geoffrey, and asked him softly: "Would you not like to go? It would please Arthur."

"I will go with Colonel Ragnor and Dr. Studley. It is the last kindness I can pay the man whom I loved as a brother."

"I think you are right, Geoffrey," said the Colonel. "Be ready to start at eight o'clock.

Then the conversation strayed into kind and noble reminiscence, and the room was filled with an atmosphere of such tender sweet solemnity that there

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was no need for speech. The eyes of the three men were dropped, but Lucia's face was outlooking and her eyes lifted. The men were speculating, the woman was believing. And she was the first to break the silence.

"Doctor," she said, "my father told me that Death is the companion of Love. Do you think the same?"

For a few moments the Doctor looked sadly at her. He seemed averse to speak. But as Goeffrey and Lucia and the Colonel all looked eagerly into his eyes he replied: "Love and Death are veiled figures moving hand in hand,

> 'Over men's heads; dread, irresistible;
> To ope the portals of that other Land
> Where the great voices sound, and visions dwell!'

but it is Love and Death that bring change and to be perfect is to have changed often."

Finer grew Lucia's listening face. It was as if the words like music lingered there; and the Doctor added: "There must be flow in life, and just as that flow is strong and rapid, we grow every day. Now change is the spiritual surge of flow, and it is nearly always that flow or movements in life, are made by Love or Death. See for instance what a change will be made in the life of Arthur's two boys. Their mother's death throws them into the world, makes them less dependent, leads them onward to

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self-reliance. To us it looks regrettable and premature; those wiser than we are saw that the hour had come '*to set life flowing.*' "

The conversation arising out of this subject greatly impressed Lucia, and as Ann was brushing her beautiful hair that night and coiling it for comfortable sleep, she said to her:

"Ann, Dr Studley thinks that Love and Death are close companions, and that Love is hardly ever present, unless Death or Sorrow is hand-in-hand with him. What do you think?"

"I think, miss, the Doctor is maybe altogether right. With some it is sorrow. I know lots of wives who fret when they are going to have a child because they say the condition is always a trouble-bringer. I have seen that idea come true nearly every time it was felt, and perhaps every time; because there is often trouble when we know nothing about it. Some women keep it still, some women tell it highway and byway, and some work or fight or get rid of it in any way they can. But love is the almighty trouble-bringer. I never knew a woman in love that wasn't in trouble some way or other. Look at your own self. You have had all kinds of disappointment and annoyance with your love affairs."

"I have that, Ann."

"And look at me—look at poor Ann Idle! What

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did love bring her? Only wrong and loss and cruel deception. But you and Mr. Gardiner have got over your long lesson, though if you haven't learned what she meant you to learn, Love won't forget; you will have the lesson over again some way. Still if you have learned it—and you've been at her school for nearly three years—why then, you won't have to learn it again. I got my lesson through Dick Idle. Then when I was well fed and cared for and had saved a good bit of money, I forgot it; and I am this day learning it over again. A turned-back lesson is often hard and ill to learn."

Now great results are often the issue of small occasions, and undoubtedly this conversation, and the personal thoughts flowing from it put forward Lucia's marriage. She had said to Geoffrey: "I have had enough of Christmas weddings. I will be married in the spring when the flowers begin to bloom and the birds to sing and build." And Geoffrey did not wish to wait until spring. He wanted her to redeem the promise in the little word "Yes" as quickly as possible and if this conversation did not win her consent to his desires, I do not know how else to account for her change of action. But on a lovely Sabbath morning in the middle of October this thing happened. Dr. Pearson after giving the benediction, said to his congregation:

"My friends I am going to perform the marriage

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ceremony immediately between Geoffrey Gardiner and Lucia Ragnor. All the congregation are cordially invited to witness it. Those who wish to retire will have five minutes in which to leave the church."

With these words Dr. Pearson went into the vestry and every eye was turned on Colonel Ragnor's pew—a square, well-curtained, well-cushioned, carpeted place of rest and privacy. None of the congregation moved but a few women who had babies at home doubtless crying for their wants to be attended to. Then Geoffrey rose and went forward to the altar, he was followed by the Colonel and his daughter, by Mrs. Pearson and Alice Pearson, Mary Lorimer, and Jean Ashleigh, intimate friends of Lucia. At the same moment Dr. Pearson and Dr. Studley, clothed in their white vestments, took their places and surrounded by a sweet sympathetic influence, the solemn words, the irrevocable words of the greatest of human promises, were reverently said.

The service appeared to everyone to be exceedingly short, for all were admiring the lovely bride in her traveling costume of silver-gray broadcloth. Never had she been so radiantly beautiful before, never so calmly and radiantly happy. The Colonel looked white and old, but Dr. Studley's face was beaming and there was not a heart in the little crowd

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standing and kneeling with Lucia in that House of God, that did not bless her as she passed, blushing and smiling, through them.

At the church door the Colonel's carriage was standing, and amid the good-byes and smiles and blown kisses of about five hundred men and women who knew and loved her she was driven rapidly away by Dixon. For a moment they saw her charming face smiling happily as it passed; then there was nothing but the flutter of a white handkerchief, and the fast disappearing carriage.

The Colonel stood by Dr. Studley. His heart was weeping bitterly and he was white and irresolute, but he finally turned with sharp abruptness, lifted his hat to the lingerers at the church gate, and taking Dr. Studley's arm said: "Let us walk home. You must stay with me today. Ann will be more than I can manage. She was in hysterics I think when we left the house. I have a heartache, my friend."

"I am your companion. What a lovely wonderful day it is! Blessed is the bride the sun shines on! From Kenton where do they go?"

"To London. Where else, I know not."

They found it hard to talk, and when they reached Abbot's Rest all was so unhappily lonely. The house looked as if sealed, the silence and sunshine were crushing, and when they entered the quiet rooms,

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they felt distinctly an empty and sorrowful atmosphere.

But Ann quickly appeared with an appetizing lunch and a boy with her brought wood and coal to make the blaze give life to the hearth; and the two men found comfort in each other's hopes and faith, as well as in the black cock and fine wine and delicate jelly and cream. And though Ann's eyes were red, she had reached the sighing stage of sorrow and was eager to know if there had been a good congregation as witnesses to her poor lamb's marriage, no notice having been given as should have been and perhaps other things neglected too.

"Everybody in the village was present I think, Ann, except yourself," said Dr. Studley.

"Ann is only a servant, but everybody in the village would not suit her. She knows half-a-dozen of them and that is enough and too many. *A low lot!*" and Ann rubbed the end of her nose with an air of scorn.

The doctor smiled and turning to the Colonel said: "I wonder why people are so interested in our marriage. Our birth does not disturb our acquaintance, and when we are christened or confirmed they care nothing about either circumstance. We can go into college or into business and the world takes no particular notice. We may write a book that all the reviews praise, but our friends never read reviews.

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If we do any good thing, we hear little about it; we might even commit a crime and they would not be astonished; they would only say, they had always expected it. We might die and they would be quite unmoved. But they fling themselves into our marriage with the greatest enthusiasm. Colonel, what is the source of this strange, uncalled-for interest?"

The Colonel laughed pleasantly. "I really do not know. It must be of a feminine nature. Ask Ann. I saw her listening to you with great interest."

"Yes, sir, not being deaf, I could not help hearing. And as you know sir, I do always examine every spoon and plate—the village girls not being to trust—so not meaning to be listening, sir, I heard what I could not help hearing."

"Well, Ann, why do people, especially women, take so much interest in weddings?"

"Women always take a deal of interest in the improvement of men, sir, and when they see a man repent of the loose ways of bachelor living and take a wife to help him live decent and proper in the sight of his God and his Queen, then all good women do feel a most uncommon joy in that man, and they want to see how his bride looks and dresses and if she carries herself as prominent as she ought to, considering she has the saving of that man in her hand. However, it is God's truth that some men can't be saved, not if an angel was helping them. The

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Colonel knows! and many a poor woman knows!"

In an hour the men had talked their loneliness away, and began to look at the bright side of things—of Lucia's happiness in particular. They grew gradually cheerful in such conversation, and cheerfulness is the essential joy and strength for the *present hour*. "And the faculty of making the best of *now* is the victorious element in the every-day affairs of life," said the Doctor, and the Colonel nodded and smiled, and one way or another the day went by much happier than they had thought it likely to go.

In the meantime Lucia and Geoffrey were speeding towards the Happy Isles that those who love are sure to reach. Nobody knows where they are, for they are not laid down on any map, but once at least in his life, every man who does not defraud his own soul is sure to find them. And we have not yet discovered or invented a language able to describe the joy of the Lover and the Beloved. They themselves can only use the sweet but childish patois which everyone *not* in love thinks so foolish. Happy are they who find in its simple terms a living voice. They have learnt the language old as creation, and fresh as if born every moment of Time. The secret of life is hid in it, and Geoffrey and Lucia knew it in all its joyful and affectionate terms. *They were perfectly happy*. And there is no need to tell of

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their long sweet life, their success and honors, their splendid homes, and their handsome sons and daughters. Count up all the good fortune of this world and all its ideal felicities, and then say:

A happy bridal is I know,
The best of earth's romances.

THE END

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